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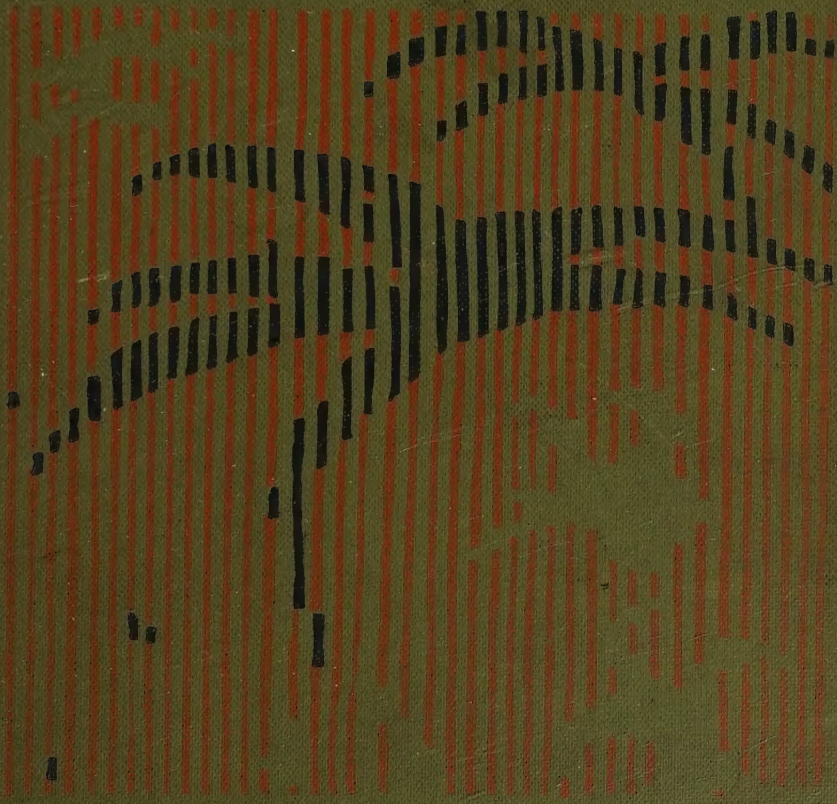

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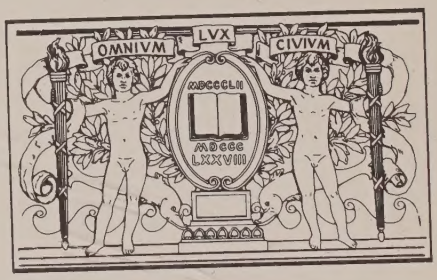

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SÓNNICA

BY

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Translated from the Spanish by
FRANCES DOUGLAS

NEW YORK
DUFFIELD & COMPANY
1918

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SÓNNICA

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CHAPTER I

AT APHRODITE'S TEMPLE.

When the ship of Polyanthus, the Saguntine pilot, arrived off the port of his native land, the mariners and fishermen, their vision sharpened by ever watching the distant horizon, had already recognized his saffron-dyed sail and the image of Victory, which, with extended wings, and holding a crown in her right hand, stretched along the prow until it dipped its feet in the waves.

"It is Polyanthus' ship! It is the Victoriata returning from Gades and New Carthage!"

To obtain a better view they rushed out upon the stone breakwater surrounding the three basins of the port of Saguntum, which were connected with the sea by a long canal.

The low marshy land, overgrown with reeds and tangled aquatic plants, extended as far as the Gulf of Sucro, which bounded the horizon by its curving blue belt, and over which the fishermen's smacks skimmed like dragon flies. The trireme slowly advanced. The colored sail fluttered in the breeze without filling, but the triple banks of oars, with rhythmic movement along its flanks caused the vessel to spring over the white foam lashing the entrance of the canal.

Night was falling. On the hill near the port the temple of Venus Aphrodite reflected from the polished surface of its pediment the fire of the setting sun. A golden atmosphere wrapped the columns and the blue marble walls, as if the father of day, before sinking to rest, were greeting the goddess of the waters with a kiss of light. The chain of dark mountains, covered with pines and shrubbery, swung around the sea in a gigantic semicircle, embracing the fertile valley in which lay the Saguntine gardens, the white villas, the rustic towers and the hamlets rising among the clustering green trees of the fields. At the other extreme of this mountain barrier, dimmed by the distance and the haze of the landscape, could be seen the city, the ancient Zacynthus, with its dwellings compressed within walls and citadels upon the fold of the hill. Far above was the Acropolis, with cyclopean ramparts above which rose the high-roofed temples and public buildings.

The port was enlivened by the stir of labor. Two ships from Massilia were loading with wine in the big basin. One from Liburnia was taking on a cargo consisting of Saguntine pottery and dried figs, to be sold in Rome, while a galley from Carthage contained in its hold great bars of silver brought from the mines of Celtiberia. Other ships, with sails furled and their banks of oars fallen against their sides, swung at anchor near the wharf, like great sleeping birds gently nodding their prows with figureheads of crocodiles or of horses, used by the navy of Alexandria, or displaying on the stern a hideous red dwarf resembling that which decorated the vessel of the Phœnician Cadmus in his astounding voyages over many seas.

The slaves bending under the weight of amphoræ and silver ingots, wearing no other clothing than a loin-cloth and a white hood, their fretted and sweating bodies bare, passed like an endless rosary along the boards leading from the mole to the ships, as they carried the merchandise from where it lay piled on the wharf into the concave holds of the vessels.

In the centre of the great middle basin rose a tower guarding the entrance to the port; a solid structure with its stone foundations laid in the deepest water. Moored to the rings which adorned its walls lay a ship of war, a Liburnian galley, high of stern, the prow a sheep's head, the great square sail furled, an armored fore-castle near the mast, and on the gunwales, forming a double row, the shields of the *classiarii*, soldiers destined for marine combats. It was a Roman vessel which at daybreak next morning was to set sail, bearing the ambassadors sent by the great Republic to settle the political disorders which agitated Saguntum.

In the second basin, a tranquil square of water where boats were constructed and repaired, sounded the hammers of the calkers striking against the wood. The dismasted galleys lay on the bank like sick monsters, showing through their lacerated flanks their strong frames and their pitch-blackened interiors. In the third and smallest, a lake of filthy waters, the fishermen's barks were anchored. Flocks of gulls whirled around them, darting down upon the spoils which floated on the water, while along the bank crowded women, old men, and boys, awaiting the arrival of the barks with fish from the Sucronian Gulf, which were sold in the interior to the more advanced tribes of Celtiberia.

The arrival of the Saguntine ship had drawn all the people of the port away from their tasks. The slaves worked lazily while their overseers were preoccupied by the entrance of the trireme, and even phlegmatic citizens seated on the mole, rod in hand, trying to capture corpulent eels which abounded in the basin, forgot their fishing while they watched the advance of the Victoriata. She had by this time come into the canal. Her hull could not be seen. The mast, with its motionless sail, rose above the tall reeds which bordered the entrance to the port.

The afternoon silence was interrupted by the hoarse cry of innumerable frogs croaking in the marshes and the chattering of birds which fluttered in the olive trees near the fane of Aphrodite. The hammer-blows of the arsenal rung more and more slowly; the people of the port were silent, watching the progress of the ship of Polyanthus. As the Victoriata rounded the sharp bend of the canal the gilded image of the prow hove into sight, and then the first oars quickly followed, like enormous red talons, clutching the glossy surface of the water with a force which flung aloft the white spray.

The crowd, amid which chafed the eagerly watching families of the mariners, burst into acclamations as the ship swung into the port.

"Greeting, Polyanthus! Welcome, son of Aphrodite! May Sónnica, your mistress, overwhelm you with riches!"

Naked, brown-skinned boys dived head-first into the basin, swimming around the ship like a swarm of young Tritons.

The people of the port praised their compatriot Poly-

anthus, exaggerating his skill. According to them his ship lacked nothing; well might the rich Sónnica be satisfied with her freedman. Forward on the vessel stood the *proreta,* motionless as a statue, watching with swift glances to discover the presence of obstacles; the crew, naked, their sweaty backs glistening in the sun, bent over the oars, and on the poop the *gubernator,* Polyanthus himself, insensible to weariness, wrapped in his ample red mantle, the tiller firmly held in his right hand, and in his left a white staff which he waved rhythmically, marking the swing of the rowers. Near the mast stood men in strange costumes, and motionless women wrapped in flowing mantles.

The ship glided into the port like an enormous crustacean, parting the dead and silent waters with her prow, which but recently had been fretting the waters of the gulf.

As she cast anchor near the mole and threw out her gang-plank, the rowers were forced to club back the multitude which crowded forward eager to board the ship.

The pilot gave orders from the poop; his red robe moved from place to place like a flame kindled by the setting sun.

"Eh! Polyanthus! Welcome, navigator! What cargo do you bring?"

The pilot saw two young horsemen on the bank. The one who addressed him was wrapped in a white mantle; one of its corners covered his head, leaving exposed his beard done into curls and lustrous with pomatum. The other clung to the back of his steed with his strong bare legs; he wore the sagum of the Celtiberians, a short

wool tunic over which the broadsword hung from his shoulder, and his hair, as thick and dishevelled as his beard, outlined a brown and manly countenance.

"Greeting, Lachares! Greeting, Alorcus!" replied the pilot with an expression of respect. "Shall you see Sónnica, my mistress?"

"This very night," answered Lachares. "We sup at her country-seat. What bring you?"

"Tell her that I have argentiferous lead from New Carthage, and wool from Bætica. Excellent voyage!"

The two youths tugged at their horses' reins.

"Ah! Wait a moment," added Polyanthus. "Tell her that I have not forgotten her instructions. I am bringing what you so greatly desire, the dancing girls from Gades."

"We are all grateful to you," said Lachares, laughing. "Hail, Polyanthus; may Neptune favor you!"

The two riders set off at a gallop, becoming lost to view among the hovels grouped around the base of the temple of Aphrodite.

Meanwhile one of the ship's passengers landed, making his way through the crowd. He was a Greek. All knew his origin by the *pilos* which covered his head, a conical leather helmet, after the fashion of that worn by Ulysses in Greek paintings. He was clad in a short, dark tunic, adjusted around his waist by a leather belt, from which hung a pouch. His chlamys, which did not reach his knees, was fastened at the right shoulder by a copper brooch; worn and dusty laced shoes covered his stockingless feet, and his sinewy arms, carefully freed from hair, rested on a great dart which was almost a lance. His hair, short and arranged in thick curls,

hung beneath the *pilos,* forming a hollow crown around his head. It was black, but silvery threads shone in it and also in his broad short beard. His upper lip was carefully shaved in the Athenian style.

He was a strong and agile man, in the prime of life, healthy and vigorous. His eyes had an ironic glance, and in them sparkled something of that fire which reveals men born for warfare and for contact with the world. He walked at ease about the unfamiliar port, like a traveler accustomed to all manner of contrasts and surprises.

The sun began to sink, and work at the port had ceased. The crowd which had swarmed on the wharf was gradually scattering. Bands of slaves stretching their aching limbs and wiping off the sweat, passed near the stranger. Controlled by the clubs of their guards, they were about to be locked up until the next morning in caves in the nearby hill, or in the oil mills situated beyond the mariners' taverns, the inns, and the brothels, with their mud walls and broad roofs, which as a complement to the port were grouped at the foot of the hill of Aphrodite.

The merchants also left in search of their horses and chariots to ride to the city. They passed in groups, looking over the records on their tablets, and discussing the operations of the day. Their diverse types, dress, and bearing, showed a great mixture of races in Zacynthus, a commercial city to which in ancient times flocked the vessels of the Mediterranean, and whose traffic was in rivalry with that of Emporion and Massilia. The Asiatic or African merchants who imported ivory, ostrich feathers, spices, and perfumes for the rich of

the city, were distinguished by their majestic step, their tunics with flowers and birds embroidered in gold, their green buskins, their tall embroidered tiaras, and their beards falling over their breasts, curled so as to lie in horizontal waves. The Greeks laughed and talked incessantly, jesting over their business affairs, and overwhelming with volubility the grave, bearded, diffident Iberian exporters dressed in coarse wool, who, with their silence seemed to protest against the stream of useless words.

The wharves were deserted one after another, the life of the place flowing along the road toward the city. Horses galloped, raising clouds of dust, chariots rolled along, and little African donkeys passed with a short trot, bearing on their backs some corpulent citizen or other, seated like a woman.

The Greek walked slowly along the mole behind two men clad in short tunics, wearing buskins and little conical hats with drooping brims, like those of the Hellenic shepherds. They were two artisans from the city. They had spent the day fishing, and were returning to their lodgings gazing with ill dissimulated pride at their baskets in which writhed and wriggled barbels and eels. They were talking in Iberian, frequently mixing Greek and Latin words in their conversation. It was a not unusual dialect in that ancient colony, which was in continual contact through commerce with the principal peoples of the earth. The Greek, as he followed them down the wharf listened to their conversation with the curiosity of a stranger.

"You will come in my cart," said one of them. "My donkey awaits me at Abiliana's inn. The beast as you

know is the envy of all my neighbors. We shall yet reach the city before the gates are closed."

"I thank you, neighbor. It is not prudent to travel alone when the country is swarming with adventurers whom we take as hirelings for the wars with the Turdetani, and all the people who fled from the city after the last revolt. Day before yesterday, as you know, the dead body of Acteio, the barber of the Forum, was found in the road. He was assassinated and robbed as he was returning from his little country-house at nightfall."

"They say that we shall live more tranquilly now since the Roman intervention. The legates from Rome have ordered a few heads cut off; and they affirm that after this we shall have peace."

The two men stopped a moment and turned their heads to look at the Roman liburna, which could barely be distinguished near the tower in the port, wrapped in the shadows of evening. Then they walked slowly onward, as if in deep thought.

"You know," continued one of them, "that I [illegible] a shoemaker who has his shop near the Forum a[illegible] been able to save a sack of silver victoriati in order to live at ease in his old age, and to spend the afternoons, at the port, rod in hand. I do not know as much as those rhetoricians who stroll up and down outside the city wall disputing and shouting like Furies, nor do I worry my brain as do the philosophers who gather on the porticos of the Forum to quarrel amid the jests of the merchants as to whether this or that one of the men who occupy themselves there in Athens with such matters is in the right. But, with all my ignorance, I ask

myself, neighbor, why this strife between us men who live in the same city who should deal with one another like good brothers? Why?"

The shoemaker's comrade replied with vigorous nods of assent.

"I understand," continued the artisan, "that from time to time we shall be at war with our neighbors the Turdetani. Sometimes on account of a question of irrigation, again on account of pasture-grounds, but mainly because of boundary lines, and to keep them from enjoying this beautiful port, I understand that the citizens take up arms and seek battle, going out to destroy their fields and burn their huts. But those people are not of our race, and that is how a great city makes itself respected. Besides, war yields slaves, which often are scarce, and what would we men, we citizens, do without slaves?"

"I am poorer than you, neighbor," said the other fisherman. "I do not earn as much making saddles as you do making shoes; but in spite of my poverty I can afford to have a Turdetan slave, who helps me very much, and I desire war, because it brings in considerably more work."

"War with our neighbors—that is welcome. The young men are restless, and seek ways of distinguishing themselves, the Republic acquires importance in consequence, and, after tramping through valleys and mountains, all will buy shoes and have their saddles mended. Very well; that enlivens business. But why have we been at work for over a year converting the Forum into a battlefield and turning every street into a fortress? At best you are in your shop extolling to a citizeness

the elegance of a pair of papyrus sandals of Asiatic fashion, or of Greek buskins of great majesty, when you hear in the nearest plaza the clash of arms, shouts, death cries, and you rush to shut the door so that a stray missile will not nail you to your seat! And why? What reason is there for living like cats and dogs in the bosom of this Zacynthus, which used to be so tranquil and so industrious?"

"The pride and riches of the Greeks"——began his companion.

"Yes, I know that reason. The hatred between Iberians and Greeks; the belief that the latter, by their riches and wisdom, dominate and exploit the former—as if in the city there actually existed Iberians and Greeks! Iberians are those who are behind those mountains which mark off our horizon; a Greek is he whom we have seen disembark, and who is following our footsteps; but we are only sons of Zacynthus or of Saguntum, as they wish to call our city. We are the product of a thousand encounters by land and by sea, and Jupiter himself would be driven into a corner to tell who our grandparents were. Who can enumerate the people that have come here and have remained, in spite of others having come afterward to wrest from them the dominion of these lands and mines, since Zacynthus was bitten by the serpent in these fields, and our father Hercules raised the great walls of the Acropolis? Hither came the peoples of Tyre with their red sailed ships for the silver from the interior; the mariners from Zante fleeing with their families from the tyrants of their country; the Rutulian race from Ardea, people from Italy, who were powerful in the times when Rome

did not as yet exist; Carthaginians of the epoch in which they thought more of commerce than of arms—— and how do I know how many other peoples? You should hear the pedagogues when they explain our history on the portico of the temple of Diana! And I, do I know, perchance, whether I am Greek or Iberian? My grandfather was a freedman from Sicily who came to take charge of a pottery and married a Celtiberian from the interior. My mother was a Lusitanian who came here on an expedition to sell gold dust to merchants from Alexandria. I call myself a Saguntine like all the rest. Those who consider themselves Iberians in Saguntum believe in the gods of the Greeks; the Greeks unconsciously adopt many Iberian customs; they think themselves different because they have divided the city in half and live separate; but their feasts are the same, and in the next Panathenæa you will see, together with the daughters of the Hellenic merchants, those of the citizens who cultivate the earth and who dress in coarse cloth and let their beards grow to more closely resemble the tribes of the interior.

"Yes, but the Greeks dominate everywhere, they are masters of everything, they have taken possession of the life of the city."

"They are the wisest, the bravest; they have something almost divine about them," said the shoemaker sententiously. "See if that is not true of the one who is following us. He is poorly dressed; perhaps he has not an obolus in his pocket for supper; perhaps he will sleep beneath the open sky, and yet, it seems as if Zeus had come down from the heavens in disguise to visit us."

The two artisans turned their gaze instinctively to look at the Greek, and continued on their way. They had arrived near the huts which formed an animated town around the port.

"There is another reason," said the leather-worker, "for the war which divides us. It is not only the hatred between Greeks and Iberians, it is because some want us to be friends of Rome and others of Carthage."

"We should not affiliate with either," said the shoemaker tersely. "Tranquilly carrying on our commerce as in other times is the way in which we should prosper best. I reproach the Greeks of Saguntum for having allied us with Rome."

"Rome is the conqueror."

"Yes, but Rome is very far away, and the Carthaginians are almost at our doors. Troops from New Carthage can come here by a few days' journey."

"Rome is our ally and she will protect us. Her legates, who leave to-morrow, have put an end to our strifes, beheading the citizens who disturbed the peace of the city."

"Yes, but those citizens were friends of Carthage and old-time protégés of Hamilcar. Hannibal will not easily forget his father's friends."

"Bah! Carthage wants peace and wide commerce to enrich herself. Since her defeat in Sicily she fears Rome."

"The senators may be afraid, but Hamilcar's son is very young, and, for my part, I am afraid of these boys converted into chiefs, who forget wine and love to dream only of glory."

The Greek could hear no more. The two artisans

had disappeared among the huts, and the echo of their argument was lost in the distance.

The stranger was alone in the unfamiliar port. The wharves were deserted; lights began to glisten on the poops of the ships, and in the distance, over the waters of the bay, rose the moon like an enormous honey-colored disk. Only in the small fishermen's ports lingered animation. The women, naked from above the waist, tucking between their legs the rags which served them as a tunic, walked into the water up to their knees to wash the fish, and then putting them into broad baskets on their heads they took up their journey, dragging their big-bellied, naked youngsters after them. From the silent and motionless ships came groups of men who traveled toward the wretched settlement spread around the foot of the temple. They were sailors going in search of taverns and brothels.

The Greek knew those customs well; it was a port like many others he had seen—the temple on the hill to guide the navigator, and below, wine in abundance, easy love, and the sanguinary fight as a termination of the feast. He thought for a moment of starting on the journey to the city, but the way was long, he did not know the road, and he preferred to remain, sleeping where he could until sunrise.

He had entered one of the winding lanes formed by the hovels thrown together at hazard, as if they had fallen in confusion from the sky, with their walls of earth and roofs of reeds and straw, with narrow slits for light, and with only a few rags sewn together or a bit of threadbare tapestry, for a door. In some, with less wretched exteriors, dwelt the modest traders of the

port, ship chandlers, dealers in grain, and those who, with the assistance of slaves, brought casks of water from the springs in the valley to the vessels; but the majority of the hovels were taverns and lupanars.

Some of the houses had alongside the doors signs in Greek, Iberian, or Latin, painted with red ochre.

The Greek heard some one calling him. It was a little, bald, fat man beckoning from the door of his dwelling.

Greeting, son of Athens!" he said, to flatter him with the name of the most famous city of Greece. "Come in! Here you will be among your own, for my forefathers also came from Athens. See the sign on my tavern, 'To Pallas Athene'. Here you will find wine from Laurona, as excellent as that from Attica; if you wish to try the Celtiberian beer, I have it also, and if you desire, I can serve you with a certain flask of wine from Samos, as authentic as the goddess of Athens which adorns my counter."

The Greek answered with a smile and a shake of his head, while the loquacious tavern-keeper went into his hut, lifting the tapestry to allow a group of mariners to enter.

After a few steps he stopped, attracted by a faint whistle which seemed to be calling him from the interior of a cabin. An old woman, wrapped in a black mantle, stood in her doorway making signs to him. Within, by the light of an earthern lamp hanging by a slender chain, he could see several women squatting on mats in the attitude of placid beasts, with no other sign of life than a fixed smile which displayed their shining teeth.

"I am in haste, good mother," said the stranger, smiling.

"Stay awhile, son of Zeus!" urged the old woman in the Hellenic idiom, disfigured by the harshness of her accent and by the hiss of breathing between toothless gums. "The moment I saw you I knew you for a Greek. All who come from your country are gay and beautiful; you look like Apollo seeking his celestial sisters. Enter! Here you will find them——"

Approaching the stranger, and catching him by the border of his chlamys, she enumerated the charms of her Iberian, Balearic, or African wards; some majestic and grand like Juno, others small and graceful like the hetæræ of Alexandria and Greece; and seeing that the customer released his garment from her clutch and continued on his way, she raised her voice, believing that she had not divined his taste, and she spoke of white youths with long hair, beautiful as the Syrian boys who were contended for by the gallants of Athens.

The Greek had passed out of the winding lane, but he could still hear the voice of the old woman, who seemed to become shamelessly intoxicated crying her infamous wares. He was now in the country, at the beginning of the high road to the city. On his right rose the hill of the temple, and at its base, opposite the flight of stone steps, he saw a house larger than the others, an inn with doors and windows illuminated by lamps of red earthernware.

Seated on stone benches were sailors from all countries, demanding food in their several languages—Roman soldiers wearing corselets of bronze scales, short swords hanging from their shoulders; at their feet hel-

mets topped by a crest of red horsehair in the form of a brush; rowers from Massilia, almost naked, their knives half hidden among the folds of the rag knotted around their waists; Phœnician and Carthaginian mariners with wide trousers, wearing tall caps in the form of mitres with heavy silver pendants; negroes from Alexandria, athletic and slow of movement, displaying their sharp teeth as they smiled, making one think of frightful cannibalistic scenes; Celtiberians and Iberians with gloomy dress and tangled hair, looking suspiciously in all directions, and instinctively raising their hands to their broad knives; some redmen from Gaul, with long mustaches and coarse red hair tied behind and falling down their necks; people, in fine, who had come, or had been flung by the hazards of war and the sea, from one point of the known world to another, one day victorious warriors, and slaves the next, now sailors and anon pirates, acknowledging no law nor nationality; with no other respect than the fear of the master of the vessel who was quick to order them to the whip or the cross; with no other religion than that of the sword and the strong arm; testifying by the wounds which covered their bodies, in the long cicatrices which furrowed their muscles, by cuts on their ears covered by matted hair, to a past mysterious with horrors.

Some ate standing by the counter, behind which were ranged the amphoræ corked with fresh leaves; others seated on the stone benches along the walls held earthenware plates on their knees. Most had thrown themselves down on the floor upon their bellies, like wild beasts devouring their prey, reaching into their plates with their hairy claws, crunching the food in their

jaws as they talked. They had not yet upset their wine nor asked for the women. They ate and drank with the appetite of ogres tormented by the deprivations of the long voyages, and morally starved by the brutal discipline on shipboard.

Finding themselves huddled together in a small space, filled with smoke from the lamps and with vapors from the food, they felt the necessity of communicating with each other, and between mouthfuls, each spoke to his neighbor, paying no heed to difference of idiom, making themselves understood finally by a language composed more of gestures than of words. A Carthaginian was telling a Greek about his last voyage to the islands of the Great Sea, beyond the Pillars of Hercules, through a gray body of water covered with fog, until they arrived at an abrupt coast known only to the pilots of his country, where tin was found. Farther down the bench a negro, with grotesque mimicry, was describing to a couple of Celtiberians an excursion down the Red Sea, until they reached mysterious shores, deserted by day, but covered by night with moving fires and inhabited by hairy men as agile as monkeys, the skins of some of whom they stuffed with straw and carried to the temples of Egypt to offer to the gods. The older Roman soldiers, paying no attention, in their insolence as conquerors, to the humiliated Carthaginians who were listening, told of their great victory on the Ægates islands which drove the Carthaginians out of Sicily, ending the first Punic War. The Iberian shepherds mixed in among the navigators wished to off-set the effect of these maritime adventures, and they bragged of the horses belonging to their tribe, and of their mar-

velous swiftness, while a little Greek, lively and keen, in order to overwhelm the barbarians and to demonstrate the superiority of his race, began to declaim fragments of some ode learned in the port of Piræus, or he intoned a lyric poem, slow and sweet, which was lost amid the noise of conversation, of crunching jaws, and of clattering plates.

They called for more light. The smoky atmosphere of the inn was constantly growing denser, and the frames of the lamps were scarcely more distinctly visible than drops of blood on the soot-blackened walls. From the kitchen floated an odor of piquant sauces and smoky wood which made many of the customers cough and weep. Some were drunk soon after beginning dinner, and they asked the slaves for crowns of flowers to adorn themselves as in the banquets of the rich. Others growled applause as they saw the den illuminated by the lurid flame of the candlewood which the proprietor lighted. The slaves passed behind the stone counter overturning great amphoræ, and ran into the kitchen only to rush back again immediately, red with suffocation, bearing great platters. Wine ran across the floor as a crater was overturned. When there appeared at the window the painted faces of some of the prostitutes —she-wolves of the port—who were awaiting the moment for making an irruption into the inn, the mariners greeted them with hoarse laughter, imitating the howl of the beast after whom they were nicknamed, and throwing them a portion of their food, over which the women fought, scratching and shrieking.

The food was all thirst-giving, so that each mouthful should be accompanied by a sip. The Greeks ate snails

floating in a sauce of saffron; fresh sardines from the gulf appeared arranged in circles around the dishes, festooned with laurel leaves; birds' heads were served covered with green sauce; the Iberian shepherds were satisfied with dried fish and hard cheese; the Romans and Gauls devoured great chunks of lamb dripping blood, and eels from the basins of the port decorated with hard-boiled eggs. All these dishes and many others were loaded with salt, pepper, and herbs of acrid odor, to which the strangest qualities were attributed. Everybody was eager to spend his money, to satisfy his hunger and thirst, and to roll on the floor drunk, consoling himself thus for the hard life of privation which awaited him on shipboard. The Romans who were to sail the next day had collected their back pay and were determined to leave their sestertii in the port of Saguntum; the Carthaginians boasted of their Republic, the richest in the world, and other mariners praised their masters, ever generous when they touched that port where business was excellent. The innkeeper was continually throwing into an empty amphora coins of all kinds, those from Zacynthus, bearing the prow of a ship, with Victory flying above it; those from Carthage with the legendary horse and the frightful Cabiric deities; and Alexandrian coins with their elegant Ptolemaic profile.

The meanest of the rowers felt the caprices of a potentate, the itch to imitate the opulent for a night that they might console themselves with its memory in future days of hunger; and they asked for oysters from Lucrinus, which an occasional ship brought packed in amphoræ with sea water as a delicacy for the great merchants of Saguntum, or the *oxygarum,* salted fish-

milt, prepared with vinegar and spices as an appetizer for which the patricians of Rome paid a great price. Black wine from Laurona and the pink wine from the Saguntine vineyards were scorned by those who had money. The wine from Massilia they despised also, sneering at the rosin and gypsum employed in its preparation, and they called for wines from the Campagna, Falerno, Monte Massico, or Cæcubum, which, in spite of the price, they drank in capacious cymbas—boat-shaped drinking vessels of Saguntine clay. Hungry for the fresh products of the field after their long sojourn on the sea, these men devoured immense quantities of vegetables and fruits, in addition to the hot dishes and a great variety of drinks ranging from Celtiberian beers to foreign wines. They fell greedily upon the plates of mushrooms; they ate handfuls of radishes dressed with vinegar; leeks, beets, garlic, and heaps of fresh lettuce from the gardens of the Saguntine domain disappeared down their throats, while they littered the floor with green, muddy leaves.

The Greek stood in the doorway with a few of the mariners who could not find room within, and contemplated the spectacle. As he gazed on the rude banquet the stranger remembered that he had not eaten since morning, when the master of the rowers on Polyanthus' ship had given him a piece of bread. The novelty of disembarking in an unknown land had quieted his stomach, accustomed as it was to privations; but now in sight of so many different foods he felt the pangs of hunger, and instinctively set one foot within the tavern, drawing it back immediately. What was the use of going in? The pouch hanging from his shoulder held papyri

testifying to his past achievements; tablets for memoranda; even pincers for extracting his beard; a comb; all the small objects of which a good Greek, addicted to the scrupulous care of his person, would not deprive himself, but search in it as he might he could find not a single obolus. The pilot, who respected the Greeks of Attica, had given him free passage on the ship when he met him wandering along the wharves at New Carthage. He was hungry and alone in a strange land, and if he should enter the hostelry to eat without offering money, he would be treated like a slave, and be driven out with a club.

Mocked by the odor of the viands and sauces, he turned to flee, tearing himself away from this torture of Tantalus, but as he drew back he bumped against a tall man clad only in a dark sagum and sandals with straps crossed to the knees. He resembled a Celtiberian shepherd; but the Greek, as he collided with him, received the impression in a hasty exchange of glances that this was not the first time he had looked into those imperious eyes which recalled to his mind the eyes of the eagle perched at the feet of Zeus.

The Greek shrugged his shoulders with indifference. What he desired was to satiate his hunger and to sleep if possible until sunrise. Turning his back on the wretched suburb, illuminated and noisy, he sought a place where he might rest, and he took the road toward the fane of Aphrodite. The temple, situated on the crest of the hill, was approached by a broad stairway of blue marble, its first step rising from the quay.

The Greek seated himself on the polished stone, proposing to await there the coming of the day. The moon

illuminated the whole upper part of the temple; the sounds from the houses near the port, the murmur of the sea, the whisper of the olive trees, and the monotonous croaking of the frogs hidden in the marshes, floated to him muffled, as if lulled by the great calm of night.

Again and again the Greek heard a strident, dismal cry, like the howl of a wolf. Suddenly it whined behind him, he felt a warm breath on his back, and as he turned he saw a woman bending toward him, her hands on her knees, her mouth rent by a stupid smile which displayed gums, in places lacking teeth.

"Greeting, handsome stranger! I saw you flee from the tumult. You must be sad here all alone. I have come to make you happy. ——What! Can it not be?"

The Greek recognized her immediately—a "she-wolf" from the port, a wretched woman such as he had seen swarming around the wharves in many countries; miserable, cosmopolitan strumpets, flames for a single night of men of all colors and races, with no other ambition than to earn a few oboli, slinking near a stone or in the shadow of a boat, old hetæræ sunk in brutality, fugitive slaves seeking liberty in obscenity and drunkenness; females who represented all that cruel men of the sea knew of love; poor beasts, weakened in their youth by excessive caresses, and destined to be treated with blows in their old age.

The stranger looked at the woman, who was still young, and detected some traces of beauty. But she was wasted, her eyes lachrymose, her mouth disfigured by broken teeth. She was wrapped in an ample mantle which must have been of beautiful weave but was now dirty and threadbare; her feet were naked, and her

tangled hair, in which the unhappy creature had thrust a branch of wild flowers, was held by a copper comb.

"You are wasting your time here," said the Greek with a kindly smile. "I have not so much as an obolus in my pouch."

The man's gentle accent seemed to intimidate the poor unfortunate. She was accustomed to blows; man to her represented brutal assault, gratification revealed with bites, and in the presence of the Greek's tender manner she seemed disconcerted and shy, as if she suspected danger.

"Have you no money?" she said with humility, after a long silence. "It matters not; here I am. You please me; I am your slave. Among all those people rioting at the hostelry my eyes have turned to you."

She bent over the Greek, caressing his curly hair with her calloused hands, while he regarded her with compassionate eyes, seeing her shrunken breast and hollow form. Hungry and alone in an unknown land he felt attracted by the kindness of the unhappy creature; there was the fraternity of misery between them.

"If you desire company, stay near me," he said; "talk as much as you wish, but do not caress me. I am hungry; I have eaten nothing since dawn, and at this moment I would exchange all the joys of Cytherea for the pittance of any mariner."

The harlot stood up straight, so great was her surprise.

"You hungry? You faint with hunger, when I thought you nourished on the ambrosia of Zeus?"

Her eyes displayed astonishment such as she would have felt had she seen Aphrodite, the nude, white, god-

dess who was guarded up there in her temple, descend from her marble pedestal and offer herself with open arms to the rowers of the port for an obolus.

"Wait, wait!" she cried with resolution, after a moment's reflection.

The Greek saw her running toward the huts, and when at last weariness and weakness began to close his eyes, he felt her near him again, touching his shoulder.

"Take this, my master! It has cost me dear to obtain it. The cruel Lais, an old woman as horrible as the Parcæ, who helps us to live through days of privation, has agreed to give me her supper, after making me take oath that by the time the sun rises I will hand her two sestertii. Eat, my love; eat and drink!"

She placed upon the steps a loaf of brown bread, made in the form of a disk, some dried fish, half a Saguntine cheese, tender and oozing whey, and a jar of Celtiberian beer.

The Greek fell upon the food, and began to devour it, followed by the gaze of the *lupa*, which sweetened at times, and acquired an almost maternal expression.

"I should like to be as rich as Sónnica, a woman who they say began like any one of us, and is now mistress of many of these ships, and has gardens as wonderful as Olympus, troops of slaves, potteries, and half the domain of the commonwealth as her own property. I should like to be rich if only for to-night, to regale you on the best there is in the city; to give you a banquet like one of Sónnica's, which last till dawn, and where, crowned with roses, you should drink the Samian wine from a golden cup."

The Greek, touched by the simplicity and ingenuousness with which she spoke, gazed at her tenderly.

"Do not thank me," she continued. "It is I who should be grateful for the joy of feeding you. What is this? I know not. Never has a man approached me before without giving me something; some give me copper coins, others a piece of cloth or a patera of wine; most of them blows and bites; all have given me something, and I have accepted, though I detested them. But you, who come poor and hungry, who do not seek me but reject me, who give me nothing, just your being near me has made a new pleasure surge through my body. As I give you food I feel intoxicated, as if I were fresh from a banquet. Tell me, Greek, are you really a man, or are you the father of the gods, descending to earth to honor me?"

Exalted by her own words, she arose, standing half way up the marble steps, and extending her rigid arms toward the temple, bathed in moonlight, exclaimed:

"Aphrodite! My goddess! If some day I manage to get together the price of two white doves, I will present them on thy altar, adorned with flowers and fire-colored ribbons, in memory of this night."

The Greek drank the bitter liquid from the jar and offered it to the woman, whose lips sought the same spot on the rim which had been touched by his.

She did not taste the supper which the Greek held out to her; she continued drinking, and the wine made her more talkative.

"If you only knew what it has cost me to get all this! The lanes are full of drunken men, who wallow in the mire and drag themselves along on their hands, tearing

one's clothing and biting one's legs. Wine runs out of the doorways of the inns. They were fighting on the wharf a little while ago. Some Africans were holding one of their companions head down in the water to cure his broken skull; a Celtiberian had opened a great gash in it with his clenched fist. Others amused themselves by catching Tuga, an Iberian girl, by the feet, and thrusting her head in the biggest vat in the tavern as long as they dared. She was half drowned when they pulled her out. It is their usual diversion. I saw poor Albura, a friend of mine, seated on the ground covered with blood, holding in the palm of her hand one of her eyes which a drunken Egyptian had knocked out with a fisticuff. This kind of thing happens every night! And yet, all at once, I have become afraid. I have only just met you, and still it seems to me as if I were living in a new world, and that for the first time I give heed to my surroundings."

She told him the story of her life. They called her Bacchis, and she was uncertain what was her native land. No doubt she was born in some other port, for she vaguely remembered in her childhood a long voyage in a ship. Her mother must have been a *lupa* also, and she herself the result of a meeting with a mariner. The name of Bacchis, which had been given her when she was little, had been borne by many famous courtesans of Greece. No doubt she had been sold to some old woman by the pilot who had brought her to Saguntum, and, while still a child, long before coming to maturity, was visited in the old woman's hut by aged merchants of the port or libertines of the city.

When her owner died she became a *lupa,* and passed

into submission to mariners, fishermen, shepherds from the mountains, and to all the brutal horde which swarmed around the port. She was not yet twenty, but she was aged, disfigured, wasted by excesses and by blows. She had always seen the city from a distance. She had only entered it twice. The *lupas* were not tolerated there. They were allowed to remain near the fane of Aphrodite, as a guarantee of the security of Saguntum, that thus the rabble which came to the port from all lands might be held at a distance, but in the city the Iberians of cleanly habits became indignant at the mere sight of the wantons, and the corrupt Greeks were too refined in their tastes to feel pity for those sellers of the body who fell like beasts beside the roadway for a bunch of grapes or a handful of nuts.

There in the shadow of the temple of Aphrodite she had spent her life, ever awaiting new ships and new men, hairy and obscene, brutal as satyrs, made ferocious by the abstinence of the sea, to be at last assassinated in some mariners' fight, or found the victim of hunger, dead beside some abandoned boat.

"And you—who are you?" Bacchis asked at last. "What is your name?"

"My name is Actæon; my native land is Athens. I have traveled over the world; in some parts I have been a soldier, in others a navigator; I have fought, I have trafficked, and I have even written verses, and discussed with philosophers things which you do not understand. I have been rich many times, and now you give me food. That is all my story."

Bacchis looked at him with eyes full of admiration, divining through his concise words a past crammed with

adventures, with terrible dangers and prodigious changes of fortune. She thought of the deeds of Achilles, and of the adventurous life of Ulysses, so often heard in the verses declaimed by Greek mariners when they were drunk.

The courtesan, reclining on the Greek's breast, fondled his hair. The Greek, grateful, smiled fraternally on Bacchis, with indifference, as if she were a child.

Two mariners came out from among the huts, and began to stagger along the wharf. A penetrating howl, which seemed to cleave the air, sounded close to Actæon's ears. His companion, impelled by habit, with the instinct of the vendor who sees a customer in the distance, had arisen to her feet.

"I will return, my master. I had almost forgotten the terrible Lais. I must give her her money before the sun rises. She will beat me as she has done before if I do not fulfill my promise. Wait for me here."

Repeating her wild howl, she went in search of the sailors, who had stopped, hailing the "she-wolf's" cries with loud laughter and obscene words.

When the Greek found himself alone, his hunger placated, he felt a certain disgust in thinking of his recent adventure. Actæon the Athenian, he for whom the richest hetæræ of the beautiful city used to dispute in the Cerameicus, protected and adored by a strumpet of the port! To avoid meeting her again he hurriedly left the temple steps, losing himself in the streets by the harbor.

Again he stopped before the hostelry in the doorway of which he had experienced the torment of hunger. The sailors were in the midst of an orgy. The tavern

keeper could barely command respect behind the counter. The slaves, terrified by blows, had taken refuge in the kitchen. Some amphoræ lay broken on the floor letting the wine escape like streams of blood, and the drunken men wallowed in the gurgling liquid as it soaked into the earthen floor, calling for drinks of which they had vaguely heard on distant voyages, or for fantastic dishes conceived by the little tyrants of Asia. One Herculean Egyptian was running on all fours imitating the growl of the jackal, and biting the women who had entered the tavern. Some negroes were disporting with feminine movements, as if hypnotized by the whirling of the umbilical dance. In the corners, on the stone benches, men and women embraced in the crude light of the torches; the smell of bare and sweaty flesh mingled with the aroma of wine; in the atmosphere of viands and of wild-beast odor, seamen, forgetting shame, committed crimes peculiar to the aberration of the epoch.

In the midst of this disorder a few men stood motionless near the counter, arguing with apparent calmness. They were two Roman soldiers, an old Carthaginian mariner, and a Celtiberian. The torpid slowness of their words, which in their anger acquired flute-like tones, their inflamed and blood-shot eyes, and their hawk-like noses, seeming to grow sharper as they talked, revealed that terrible drunkenness, stubborn and quarrelsome, which culminates in murder.

The Roman was telling of his presence in the combat on the Ægates islands, fourteen years before.

"I know you," he said insolently to the Carthaginian. "You are a republic of merchants born for lying and bad faith. If someone who knows how to sell at top

prices and cheat the buyer is wanted, I agree that you stand first; but talking of soldiers, of men, we are the best, we sons of Rome, who grasp the plow in one hand and the lance in the other."

He proudly raised his round head with its close-cropped hair and shaven cheeks, on which the chin-straps of his helmet had worn hard calloused lines.

Actæon looked through the window at the Celtiberian, the only one of the group who remained silent, but who had his glittering eyes fastened upon the bare neck showing above the Roman legionary's bronze corselet, as if attracted by the coarse veins outlined beneath the skin. Surely the Greek had seen those eyes before; they were like an old acquaintance whose name one cannot recall. There was something artificial about his person, which the Greek divined with his keen perception.

"I would swear by Mercury that that man is not what he pretends to be. He looks something more than a shepherd, and the bronze color of his face is not that of the Celtiberians, no matter how sunburned they may be. Perhaps that long hair which falls around his shoulders is false——"

He was unable to observe him longer because of the dispute between the legionary and the old Carthaginian, who gradually approached each other to hear better in the midst of the clamor which reigned in the tavern.

"I also was on that sad expedition to the Ægates," said the Carthaginian; "there is where I received this wound that crosses my face. It is true that you conquered us; but what does that show? Many times did I see your ships flee before ours, and more than once I counted Roman corpses by the hundred on the fields

of Sicily. Ah, if Hanno had not arrived too late that day of the combat at the islands! If Hamilcar had only had reinforcements!"

"Hamilcar!" disdainfully exclaimed the Roman. "A great chief who had to sue for peace! A merchant turned warrior!"

And he laughed with the insolence of the strong, not fearing the anger of the old Carthaginian, who began to stammer an answer.

The Celtiberian, who had remained silent, laid his hand upon the old man.

"Silence, Carthaginian! The Roman is right. You are peddlers incapable of measuring up with them in war. You love money too much to dominate by the sword. But Carthage is not made of those of your breed; there are others born there who will know how to stand up before those peasants of Italy!"

The Roman, seeing the rustic intervene in the dispute, became still more arrogant and insolent.

"And who can that be?" he shouted scornfully. "The son of Hamilcar? That youngster who they say had a slave for a mother?"

"Those who founded your city, Roman, were sons of a prostitute, and the day is not far distant when the horse of Carthage shall trample under foot the wolf of Romulus!"

The legionary arose trembling with fury, feeling for his sword, but he suddenly gave a savage growl and fell, pressing his hands against his throat.

Actæon had seen the Celtiberian introduce his right hand into the sleeve of his sagum, and, drawing a knife, stab the legionary in the thick neck he had been staring

at with the fixity of a wild beast while the fallen man mocked at Carthage.

The tavern shook with the strain of the combat. The other Roman seeing his companion down, hurled himself at the Celtiberian with raised sword, but quick as a flash he received a thrust in the face and was blinded by a stream of blood.

The agility of the man was astounding. His movements had the elasticity of the panther; blows seemed to rebound from his body without doing him harm. Around him fell a shower of jars, of broken amphoræ, of swords hurled through the air; but with extended arm, and knife held before him, he made a spring toward the door and disappeared.

"After him! After him!" clamored the Romans, starting in pursuit.

Attracted by the brutal joy of a man hunt, all who were sober enough to retain mastery of their legs followed him out of the hostelry. The horde of men, fired by the sight of blood, sprang over the bodies of the dying Roman and the drunken sailors who lay snoring near him. The Greek saw them break up into groups, running in all directions after the Celtiberian, who had disappeared a few steps distant from the hostelry as if dissolved into the shadow of the night.

The port thrilled with the ardor of the chase. Lights flashed along the wharves and through the village streets; the lupanars and taverns were subjected to a brutal overhauling by the Romans who were mad with fury; a fresh fight started at the door of every hut; blood was about to flow anew, when the Greek, fearing to become involved in a riot, fled to the temple. Bacchis

had not returned, and the Greek climbed up the steps and stretched out on the portico, a broad terrace paved with blue marble, over which the fluted columns supporting the pediment flung oblique bars of shadow.

When Actæon awoke he felt the warmth of the sun on his face. Birds were singing in the olive trees, and he heard voices near. As he arose he was surprised to see that day had dawned, for it seemed but a few minutes had passed since he fell asleep.

A woman, a patrician, stood not far away, smiling upon him. She was robed in a flowing white linen mantle which fell to her feet in graceful folds like the drapery of statues. A few curls of blonde hair fell over her forehead. Her lips were painted red, and her black eyes, velvety, and with a silky caress in their gaze, were surrounded by blue circles suggesting a night of fatigue. Moving her arms beneath her mantle, hidden ornaments jingled with silvery tones, and the toe of her sandal, peeping from beneath the border of her garment, shone like a jewelled star.

She was followed by two slender Celtiberian slaves, their brown, swelling breasts almost bare, their limbs wrapped in multicolored cloth. One carried a pair of white doves, the other bore on her head a basket of roses.

Actæon recognized Polyanthus, the Saguntine pilot, and also the perfumed young gallant who had been on the wharf with another horseman when the ship came in, standing near the handsome patrician.

The Greek arose, amazed at the beautiful apparition smiling upon him.

"Athenian," she said in Greek of the purest accent, "I am Sónnica, the mistress of the ship which brought

you hither. Polyanthus is my freedman and he has done well in giving you passage, for he is aware of my interest in your people. Who are you?"

"I am Actæon, and I ask the gods to shower blessings upon you for your kindness. May Venus guard your beauty while you live."

"Are you a navigator? Are you engaged in commerce? Are you traveling about the world giving lessons in rhetoric and poetry?"

"I am a soldier, as were all my ancestors. My grandfather died in Italy covering with his body the great Pyrrhus who wept for him as for a brother. My father was a captain of mercenaries in the service of Carthage, and was cruelly assassinated in the war called 'inexorable.'"

He was silent a moment as if overcome by this recollection. His voice choked, but presently he added: "I fought until recently under the orders of Cleomenes, the last Lacedæmonian. I was one of his companions, and when the hero suffered defeat I accompanied him to Alexandria, afterward traveling over the world because I could not endure the inactivity of exile. I have also been a merchant in Rhodes, a fisherman on the Bosphorus, a farmer in Egypt, and a satirical poet in Athens."

The handsome Sónnica approached him smiling. He was an Athenian possessed of all the qualities so loved by her; one of those adventurers accustomed to rapid changes of fortune, rounders of the world, who frequently chronicle their achievements when they have reached old age.

"And why have you come hither?"

"I have come by chance. Your pilot offered to bring me to Zacynthus, and I came. I felt stifled in New Carthage. I might have enlisted in Hannibal's army; it would have been sufficient perhaps to have revealed my origin to meet with welcome. The Greeks are paid great prices in every army. But a war is in progress here also, and I prefer to go against the Turdetani, to serve a city which I do not know, but which has never done me any harm."

"And did you sleep here last night? Could you not find a bed in any of the inns?"

"What I could not find was an obolus in my pouch. If I appeased my hunger, it was due to the charity of a forlorn harlot who shared her meagre supper with me. I am poor, and I was faint for food. Do not pity me, Sónnica. Do not look upon me with eyes of compassion. I have given banquets which lasted from sunset until dawn. In Rhodes, at the hour of the songs, we used to throw the metal plates out of the windows to the slaves. The life of a man should be thus, like Homer's heroes, a king in one place and a beggar in another."

Polyanthus looked upon the adventurer with interest, and the elegant Lachares, who had at first opposed Sónnica when she wished to awaken so ill-dressed a Greek, approached him, recognizing Athenian refinement beneath his humble exterior, thinking to make a friend of him in the hope of receiving lessons to his advantage.

"Come to my villa at sunset to-day," said Sónnica. "You shall dine with us. Anyone can guide you to my house. One of my ships has brought you to this land, and I wish you to find hospitality beneath my roof.

Farewell, Athenian. I also am from Athens, and seeing you I imagine that the golden lance of Pallas on the height by the Parthenon still shines before my eyes."

Bidding the Athenian farewell with a smile, Sónnica turned toward the temple, followed by the slaves.

Actæon overhead the conversation of Lachares and Polyanthus outside the temple. They had spent the night before at Sónnica's house. They had left the table at dawn. Lachares still wore his banquet crown, but the roses were withered and falling to pieces. When Sónnica heard of the arrival of the dancing girls from Gades, whom she had so impatiently awaited to present at her suppers, she took a fancy to see Polyanthus and his ship, and she wished to make a sacrifice to Aphrodite in passing, as she did whenever she went to the port. She had come in her great litter, accompanied by Lachares and the two slaves, proposing to sleep on the way back, for she generally stayed in bed until well past the hour of noon.

The pilot withdrew and went toward his ship to disembark the troop of dancers, and Actæon walked with Lachares to the entrance of the open temple.

The interior was simple and beautiful. A great square space remained roofless to allow the light to enter, and the sun's rays descending through this opening gave the changing bluish green of seawater to the azure columns with their capitals representing shells, dolphins, and cupids grasping the oar. At the lower end in a soft penumbra, laden with the perfumes of the sacrifices, stood the goddess, white, arrogant, and proud in her nudity as when she first emerged from the waves before the astonished eyes of men.

The altar was near the door. Before it stood the priest in a full linen mantle, held to his head by a crown of flowers, receiving the offerings to the goddess from the hands of Sónnica herself.

Coming out upon the peristyle she swept with a loving glance the expanse of whitecapped sea, the port glistening like a triple mirror, the immense green valley, and the distant city, gilded by the first rays of the morning sun.

"How beautiful! Look at our city, Actæon! Greece is not more exquisite."

At the foot of the great stone steps was her palanquin, which was a veritable house closed by purple curtains, decorated at their four corners with plumes of ostrich feathers. It was borne by eight athletic slaves with swelling muscles.

Sónnica ordered her women to enter this ambulatory dwelling; she pushed in Lachares, whom she treated as an inferior, and whose familiarity was tolerated as one of her caprices; and, turning toward the Greek, who stood on an upper step of the temple, she smiled once more, bidding him farewell with a wave of a hand covered to the fingernails with rings, which at every movement traced streams of light through the air.

The litter swiftly disappeared along the city road, when suddenly Actæon became aware of hands caressing his neck.

It was Bacchis, looking still more wasted and ragged in the light of day. She had one eye blackened, and bruised spots on her arms.

"I could not come before," said the slave humbly. "They only let me loose a little while ago. What peo-

ple! They barely gave me enough to pay Lais. I have been thinking of you all night, god of mine, while they were tormenting me, blowing in my face like tired satyrs."

Actæon turned away, shrinking from her caresses. He perceived the odor of wine on the wretched woman, drunk and exhausted after the adventures of the night.

"You run away from me? Yes, I understand! I saw you talking with Sónnica the rich, she whom her friends call the most beautiful woman in Zacynthus. Are you going to be her lover? Oh, I know that she will adore you. But she is only another like myself. Tell me, Actæon, why do you not take me with you? Why do you not make me your slave? My price will be only one night with you."

The Greek pushed aside the thin arms which tried to embrace him, in order to see the road where trumpets were blaring, and helmets and lances were gleaming, in the midst of a great cloud of dust.

"Those are the legates from Rome who are leaving today," said the woman.

Attracted by the charm which men of war exercised upon her childish mind, she ran down the steps to obtain a closer view of the ambassadors and their retinue.

In advance marched the trumpeters of the Roman ship, blowing their long metal tubas, their cheeks bound by broad woolen bands. An escort of citizens of Saguntum surrounded the ambassadors, making their shaggy Celtiberian horses caracole, waving their lances, their heads covered with triple-crested helmets which still bore the dents from blows received in their latest skirmishes with the Turdetani. Some old men of the Sagun-

tine senate rode sedately on heavy horses, their long beards covering their breasts. Their dark mantles, held upon their heads by embroidered tiaras, swept to their stirrups in heavy folds. The Roman ensign, overtopped by the wolf, was carried by a strong *classiarius*, and behind it rode the legates, their round, shaven heads uncovered. One was obese, and had a fat, triple chin; the other was spare, nervous, with a sharp aquiline nose; both wore embossed bronze cuirasses; their legs were covered with metal greaves, and over their protuberant thighs hung skirts the color of wine-lees, trimmed with loose strips of gold which quivered at the slightest movement of their steeds.

As the procession reached the wharf, where swarmed groups of sailors, fishermen, and slaves, they met a band of women wrapped in their mantles, who were walking along guided by an old man with insolent eyes and sunken mouth, wearing that repulsive aspect acquired by eunuchs who live perpetually in the company of enslaved women. They were the dancing girls from Gades, who, as they left Polyanthus' ship, passed unnoticed in the hubbub of the leave-taking.

Some women, issuing from the fish-wharves, offered the legates crowns of flowers gathered from the neighboring hills, and lilies from the lagoons. Acclamations arose throughout the entire length of the quay, witnessed by groups of indifferent sailors from all countries.

"Hail to Rome! May Neptune protect you! The gods accompany you!"

Actæon heard a mocking laugh behind him, and as he turned he saw the Celtiberian shepherd who had killed the legionary in the tavern the night before.

"You here?" the Greek exclaimed with surprise. "Are you alone, and do you not hide from the Romans who seek you?"

The imperious eyes of the shepherd, those strange eyes which aroused in the Greek confused and inexplicable memories, looked at him with arrogance.

"The Romans! I hate and despise them! I would go without fear even to the deck of their ship! Mind your own affairs, Actæon, and don't meddle in mine."

"How do you know my name?" exclaimed the Athenian with growing amazement, wondering also at the perfection with which the rude shepherd used the Greek tongue.

"I know your name and your life. You are the son of Lysias, a captain in the service of Carthage, and, like all of your race, you wheel around the world, without finding contentment in any part."

The Greek, so strong and sure of himself on most occasions, felt intimidated in the presence of this enigmatic man.

Absorbed in the contemplation of the cortége which had come to bid farewell to the legates, he had turned his back on Actæon. His eyes expressed hatred and scorn as he saw the bronze wolf of the Roman standard flash in the sunlight, hailed with enthusiasm by the Saguntines.

"They think themselves strong; they think themselves safe, because Rome protects them. They imagine Carthage dead, because her Senate of shopkeepers is afraid to provoke an issue with an ally of Rome. They have beheaded the Saguntine friends of the Carthaginian, those who of old were friends of the Barcas, and used

to go out to greet Hamilcar when he passed near the city on his expeditions. They do not know that there is one who will not sleep as long as peace exists. The world is not wide enough for these two peoples; either the one or the other!"

As if the acclamations of the multitude shouting farewells toward the small boat in which the legates were being borne to the liburna and the trumpet blasts which burst forth from the poop of the vessel, were whiplashes to the shepherd, with clenched teeth and eyes red with fury, he shook his sinewy arms at the ship and muttered in menacing tones:

"Rome!——Rome!"

CHAPTER II

SAGUNTUM

The sun was high in the heavens when Actæon walked toward the city along the thoroughfare called the Road of the Serpent.

On his way he overtook wagons laden with leather bottles of oil and amphoræ of wine. The files of slaves bending under the weight of heavy burdens, their feet covered with dust, drew to one side of the road to give him passage, displaying that submission and shrinking which a freeman always inspired. The Greek paused a moment before the oil mills, watching the enormous stones revolved by chained slaves; then he continued on his way skirting the bases of the hills, on the crests of which rose the *speculae,* little red watchtowers, which, with their fires, announced to the Acropolis of Saguntum the arrival of ships, or any activity observed on the opposite slope where began the territory of the hostile Turdetani.

The fertile fields of the immense domain were flooded by a golden shower of morning sunshine. From the villages, from the country-houses, from the innumerable dwellings scattered throughout the extensive valley, streamed people to the Road of the Serpent, traveling toward the city.

The majority of the Saguntine people lived in the

country, cultivating the soil. The city was relatively small. In it dwelt only the rich agriculturists, the magistrates, and foreigners. When some danger threatened, when the Turdetani attempted an incursion into the Saguntine territory, all the people streamed to the city, seeking the shelter of its walls, and the rustics, driving their flocks before them, mingled with the artisans of Saguntum, and took refuge within these precincts which they only visited when they came to town to sell their wares.

Actæon guessed, by the great number of people met along the way, that this must be market day in the Forum. The country folk strode along in single file, carrying on their heads baskets covered with leaves, clad only in a dark tunic which hung far down their bodies, outlining their forms at every step. The peasants, sunbrowned, sinewy, their single garment a skirt of skins or of coarse cloth, guided oxen drawing carts, or asses laden with bundles, and up and down the road sounded the incessant jingling of bells from flocks of goats, and the gentle lowing of cattle, as they trotted along in clouds of red dust raised by their sharp hoofs.

Some families were already returning from market, displaying with pride the articles for which they had bartered their fruits at the booths in the Forum, and their friends stopped them to admire the new fabrics, the red terra cotta cups, fresh and brilliant, the rudely wrought feminine ornaments of solid silver, and their inspection was followed by a "salve!" of congratulation, which made their possessors flush with childish pride.

Brown girls with firm, spare limbs and high foreheads, their hair hanging loose in Celtiberian fashion,

marched in pairs carrying from their shoulders long poles on which hung branches of flowers for the ladies of the city. Others carried enormous bunches of red cherries, wrapped in leaves to preserve them from the dust, and at intervals they sprang and shouted between outbursts of noisy laughter, mimicking the voices and gestures of the rich youths of Saguntum, who, to the great scandal of the city, gathered in Sónnica's garden to imitate before the statue of Dionysus the picturesque follies of Greece.

Actæon admired the beauty of the landscape; the groves of fig trees, which lent fame to Saguntum, just beginning to put forth new leaves, forming upon their ancient branches canopies of verdure which swept the ground; the vines, like waves of emerald, spreading over the plain and climbing the far off hills to the forests of pine and holly; and the olive orchards planted symmetrically in the red soil, forming colonnades of twisted branches with capitals of silvery leafage. The sight of this splendid landscape moved him, recalling to mind memories of his childhood. The valley was as beautiful as that of Mother Greece; here he would remain if the gods did not urge him forward again on his restless pilgrimage about the world.

He walked almost an hour, keeping ever before him the red mountain with the city at its base, and on its summit the innumerable constructions of the Acropolis. At a turn of the road he saw the people stop before a shrine—a long altar of stone, upon which an enormous serpent of blue marble extended its scaly rings. The rustics deposited flowers and earthen cups of milk before the motionless reptile, which with head lifted and ven-

omous jaws open seemed to threaten them. In this place the unfortunate Zacynthus had been bitten by the serpent as he was returning to Greece with the red cattle stolen from Geryon. His body was burned on the Acropolis, and the city grew around the spot. The simple people worshipped the reptile as one of the founders of their *patria,* and with affectionate words they surrounded it with offerings, which mysteriously disappeared, causing many to believe that it came to life in the dark, and they imagined that they heard its frightful hissing for great distances on stormy nights.

As Actæon drew nearer to Saguntum he saw the tombs which rose on both sides of the road, attracting the attention of the traveler by their inscriptions. Behind these extended gardens enclosed by thick hedges over which peeped the branches of fruit trees belonging to the country-houses of the rich. Some slave women were watching nude children of pronounced Grecian type who played and wrestled. A corpulent old man, wrapped in a purple chlamys, stood in a garden gateway observing the passing of the flood of wretched people with the cold arrogance of a merchant newly risen to affluence. On the terrace of a villa Actæon fancied that he saw a gold-dyed coiffure in Athenian style interlaced with red ribbons, and near it a waving fan of multicolored feathers of Asiatic birds. These were the villas of the rich patricians of Saguntum who had retired from business.

Upon nearing the river, the Bætis-Perkes, which divided the city from the champaign, the Greek noticed that he was walking beside a girl, almost a child, driving a flock of goats before her. Slender, well-formed,

with spare limbs, her skin a brown and velvety color, she would have looked like a boy had it not been that her short tunic, open on the left side, afforded glimpses of her slightly rounded breast, with a gentle cup-like curve, as it were a bud beginning to expand with the vigor of youth. Her black eyes, moist and large, seemed to fill her whole face, bathing it with a mysterious effulgence, and through her lips, dry and cracked by the wind, shone her white teeth, strong and regular. Her hair knotted behind her neck she had adorned with a garland of poppies plucked in the wheat. She carried over her shoulder with masculine ease a heavy net filled with white cheeses as round as loaves of bread, fresh, and still oozing whey. With her disengaged hand she was caressing the white fleece of a straight-horned goat, her favorite, which rubbed against her limbs, ringing a little copper bell worn on its neck.

Actæon was charmed contemplating her girlish figure, so sturdy for labor, in which the freshness of youth triumphed over fatigue. Her slenderness, with lines erect and harmonious, reminded him of the elegance of the Tanagra figurines on the tables of the hetæræ of Athens; of the imperious virility of the canephoræ painted in black around Greek vases.

The girl cast furtive glances at him, and then smiled, showing her teeth with juvenile confidence on feeling herself admired.

"You are a Greek, are you not?"

She spoke like the people of the port, in that strange idiom of a maritime city open to all peoples, a mixture of Celtiberian, Greek, and Latin.

"I am from Athens. And you—who are you?"

"I am called Rhanto, and my mistress is Sónnica the rich. Have you not heard of her? Her ships are in every port, she has slaves by the hundred, and she drinks from cups of gold. Do you see above those olive trees, on the side toward the sea, that small rose-colored tower? It is the villa where she lives as soon as the passing of winter allows her to leave the city. I belong at the villa, and I am in her service during the open season. My father has charge of her flocks, and she often comes down to our stables to play with the goats."

Actæon was surprised at the frequency with which he had heard of Sónnica since setting foot on Saguntine soil. The name of that opulent woman, whom some called "the rich," and others "the courtesan," was in every mouth. The shepherdess, who evinced a certain attraction toward the stranger, continued:

"She is good. Sometimes she seems sad; she says she languishes with tedium in the midst of her riches; she is indifferent to everything, and in that mood she is capable of letting all her slaves be crucified without interfering. But when she is happy she is as kind as a mother, and she will not allow us to be punished. Her overseer in charge of the slaves is a cruel man, an Iberian freedman, who watches us, and at every instant threatens us with the lash and the cross. He has whipped my father several times on account of a lost ewe, or a goat which had broken its leg, or because a little milk was spilled in the cheese-making season. I would have received his blows myself had it not been for the respect he feels for me on account of having seen me caressed sometimes by Sónnica."

Rhanto spoke of the terrible situation of the slaves

with the naturalness of a creature accustomed from birth to witnessing such severities.

"In winter," she continued, "I go to the mountain with my father, and I await with impatience the coming of the season when my mistress will return to the villa, and I can come down to the plain where there are flowers. Then I can spend the whole day in the shade of a tree surrounded by my goats."

"And how have you learned something of Greek?"

"Sónnica speaks it with rich people of the city, who are her friends, and with the slaves who serve her. Besides——"

She hesitated, and her pale cheeks flushed.

"Besides," she persisted, with animation, "my friend Erotion, the son of Mopsus, the archer who came from Rhodes, speaks it. He is a friend who helps me watch the goats when he is not working in the pottery, which also belongs to Sónnica."

She pointed to the great works near the river, the famous Saguntine potteries, which revealed, between clay walls, the cupolas of its ovens like enormous red bee-hives.

From one side of the road among the trees, sounded mellow notes, wild and joyous flute-tones, and Actæon saw a boy spring into the highway. He was about the same age as Rhanto, tall, slender, barefooted, clad only in a soft goat-skin which hung over his left shoulder, leaving his right exposed, and was tied together at the waist. His eyes were like live coals, his black hair had bluish tones and, forming short ringlets, shook like a heavy mane with the nervous movements of his head. His arms, thin but strong, with the skin stretched

by the tension of veins and tendons, were stained to the elbow by the red potter's clay.

Actæon, as he contemplated the short, correct profile of the handsome youth, and the nervous vivacity of his body, was reminded of the apprentices to the sculptors at Athens, artistic youths who in the broad glare of day, before returning to the studios, scandalized the well-behaved citizens by their frolics in the promenade of the Cerameicus.

"This is Erotion," said Rhanto, who smiled sweetly as she saw her friend. "Although born in Saguntum, he is a Greek like yourself, stranger."

The youth did not glance at the girl; he stood looking at the stranger respectfully.

"Are you from Athens, really?" he said with admiration. "You cannot deny it. You look like Ulysses when he was wandering about the world, passing through the adventures related by Father Homer. I have seen just such as you on vases and in reliefs, resembling in figure and dress the husband of Penelope. Greeting, son of Pallas!"

"And you—are you also one of Sónnica's slaves?"

"No," the boy hastily answered with pride. "Rhanto is a slave, but perhaps some day she will not be. I am free; my father is Mopsus, a Greek from Rhodes, and the chief archer of Saguntum. He came from there with no other fortune than his bow and arrows, and now he is rich, since his recent expedition against the Turdetani, and he figures as the first in the militia of the city. I work in the pottery for Sónnica, who is very fond of me. She it was who gave me the name of Erotion, because when I was little I looked like a cupid. I am not one

of those who mould clay, nor turn the wheel to shape the vases. They call me the artist; I make decorations of foliage, I model animals, I can make the head of Diana from memory, and no one can engrave in clay the great seal of Saguntum as I can. Do you know what it is like? A ship without sails, with three banks of oars; above it flies Victory in long draperies, depositing a crown on the prow. I could, if you wish, model your figure——"

But he stopped, as if ashamed at these last words, and added sadly:

"How you must be laughing at me, stranger! You come from *there*, from that marvelous country of which my father so often talks. You must have seen the Parthenon and Athene Promachos which navigators distinguish far out at sea long before they can descry Athens; the wonderful procession of horses in the metopes; the prodigious works of Phidias. How I long to see all that! When a ship comes into port from Greece I run away from the pottery and spend whole days in the taverns with the mariners. I drink with them, I give them presents of figurines in lewd attitudes, which make them laugh, just for the sake of getting them to tell me what they have seen—the temples, the statues, the paintings; and their stories, instead of calming me, excite my longing . . . . Ah, if Sónnica would allow it! . . . . If only she would let me go in one of her ships when they set sail for Greece!"

Afterward, he added earnestly:

"This girl you see here, my sweet Rhanto, is all that sustains me. If she did not exist I should long ago have sought the *gubernator* of a ship, should have sold my-

self to him as a slave, if necessary, to travel over the world, to see Greece, and to become an artist like those to whom you render there the same honors as to the gods."

The three walked on in silence for some time behind the cloud of dust raised by the goats. The boy gradually recovered his serenity at the side of Rhanto, who had taken one of his hands in hers.

"And you—why do you come here?" he asked Actæon.

"I came as did your father. I am a Greek without fortune, and I wish to offer my arms to the Saguntine Republic in its wars with the Turdetani."

"Speak to Mopsus. You will find him in the Forum, or above on the Acropolis near the temple of Hercules, where the magistrates gather. He will be glad to see you; he adores those of your race, and he will stand sponsor for you before the city."

Again silence fell. The Greek noticed the loving glances exchanged between the two young people, the fervid pressure of their clasped hands, the tender inclination of their healthy young bodies, which seeking each other, clung together. Erotion, as if obeying an unspoken request from his beloved, drew from his bosom a flute made of a hollow reed, and began to blow upon it softly, producing tender, pastoral music, to which the goats responded with bleating.

The Greek realized that his presence was becoming undesirable to the happy lovers, for they gradually slackened their pace.

"Farewell, children! Travel without haste; youth is on time whenever it arrives. We shall meet again in the city."

"May the gods protect you, stranger," replied Rhanto. "If you need anything you will find me in the Forum where I have to sell these cheeses and some others which were brought in the farmer's cart at dawn."

"Farewell, Athenian! Speak to my father, but do not tell him with whom you saw me."

Actæon crossed the river, picking his way between the carts which were immersed in the water up to their axles, and stood before the ramparts of the city, admiring their strength, the bases of undressed stone, fitted closely without mortar, supporting wall and towers of strong masonry.

At the gate of the Road of the Serpent, which was the main entrance, he was detained by a jam of men, wagons, and horses in the narrow tunnel. Inside the city, and almost against the wall, was the temple of Diana, a shrine known throughout the world for its antiquity, and which gave not a little fame to the Saguntines. Actæon paused to admire the roof of juniper planks of venerable age, but, eager to see the city, he continued on his way.

There was to be seen down at the end of a straight street, where the buildings widened out, forming an enormous right-angled space, a great square plaza with beautiful structures sustained by arches, beneath which the people were swarming. It was the Forum. Above the roofs at the lower end could be seen houses and more houses with white walls climbing up the mountain slope; and in the background the walls of the Acropolis, the colonnades of the temples sustaining the friezes consisting of enormous carved stones.

Actæon, following the road leading to the Forum, was reminded of the maritime suburb of the Piræus. This was the merchants' district, inhabited mainly by Greeks. The stir of traffic could be seen through the windows of the lower stories; slaves were piling up bales; young men with curly hair and aquiline noses were tracing on their wax tablets their complicated business accounts, and samples of their wares were exposed on small tables before the doors of the houses; there were piles of wheat or wool and heavy rough pieces of marble from the quarries. The merchants, standing in their doorways and leaning against the jambs, talked with their customers, gesticulating and with smooth accent calling upon the gods as witnesses that they were being ruined in their business.

In some shops, the proprietors, in vestments embroidered with golden flowers, wearing tall mitres and purple sandals, with light, sphinx-like eyes, and stroking the curls of their perfumed beards, listened in silence to their customers. They were traders from Africa and Asia, Carthaginians, Egyptians, Phœnicians, who dealt in costly merchandise—trinkets of gold, tusks of ivory, ostrich feathers, and pieces of amber. Before their doors paused rich women clad in white mantles, followed by slaves, and as they talked they peeped their rosy faces into the shop, fascinated by the exotic aroma of stimulating spices from Asia and mysterious perfumes from the Orient. Rare birds brought from the East strode majestically among the bales with strident calls, trailing their multicolored plumage like a royal mantle.

Actæon, after hastily examining these shops, entered the Forum. It was market day, and the life of the city

streamed to the great square. Farmers spread out their garden stuff near the porticos; shepherds from the public domain piled their cheeses in pyramids in front of little pitchers of milk, and women of the port, brown and almost naked, called attention to their fresh fish, arranged upon beds of leaves in flat rush baskets. At one end shepherds from the mountain, dressed in esparto, ferocious of aspect, and armed with lances, watched over cattle and horses offered for sale. These were Celtiberians, of whom it was told with horror that they sometimes ate human flesh, and they seemed to feel imprisoned inside the plaza, contemplating with hostile eyes that bee-like activity, so different from the independent solitude they enjoyed in their wandering life. The riches excited their appetites for robbing and horse-stealing, and, grasping their lances, they stared with ferocious eyes at the group of armed mercenaries in the service of the city, who at the lower end of the Forum, on the steps of the temple, guarded the senator charged with dispensing justice on market days.

In the centre of the square swarmed the multitude, buying and dickering, dressed in a thousand colors, and speaking diverse tongues. The virtuous women of the city, simply dressed in white, passed along, followed by slaves who deposited in netted sacks the provision for the week; the Greeks, in long, saffron-colored chlamydes investigated everything, haggling tediously before making an insignificant purchase; the Saguntine citizens, Iberians who had lost their primitive rudeness through infinite intermarriages, imitated the manner and bearing of the Romans who were at the moment the people in highest esteem. Mingled with these were natives from

the interior, bearded, begrimed, with long dishevelled hair, attracted by the market in spite of their dislike for the city, and particularly for the Greeks on account of their refinement and riches.

Some Celtiberians, chiefs of the tribes nearest to Saguntum, remained on horseback in the centre of the Forum, without putting aside their lances, and still clinging to their shields of woven bull-sinews. They wore triple-crested helmets and leather cuirasses, as if they were on hostile soil and feared treachery. Meanwhile their women, agile, brown, and masculine, moved from place to place, their ample vestments, embroidered in gayly colored flowers, fluttering as they walked, and anon they stopped with childish admiration before the table of some Greek selling crystal beads and coarsely engraved necklaces and trinkets of bronze.

Mantles of finest linen and costly purple brushed against the naked limbs of slaves or against the Celtiberian sagum of black wool buckled at the shoulder. Coiffures in Grecian style with red ribbons plaited in, the tuft of curls at the back of the head resembling the flame of a torch, the forehead small as a sign of supreme beauty, mingled with coiffures of the Celtiberian women, who wore their foreheads shaven and shiny to make them larger, their hair curled around a little stick placed on their heads, forming a sharp horn from which hung a black veil. Other Celtiberian women wore strong steel collars with little wires which were brought together above the coiffure, and from this cage, which enclosed the head, hung the veil, proudly displaying their enormous foreheads, brilliant and luminous as the moon in her first quarter.

Actæon lingered wondering at the costumes of these women, and at their masculine and warlike aspect. His quick Grecian perceptions divined danger as he contemplated the barbarians motionless on their steeds in the centre of the Forum, from that height dominating with looks of hatred this nation of merchants and farmers. They were like birds of prey that were compelled to come down to the plain as thieves in order to find food for existence in their arid mountains. Saguntum surrounded by such peoples would some day have to struggle for supremacy against them.

The Greek pondering this, entered the colonnades where the idle of the city were gathered before the shops of barbers, money changers, and vendors of wines and refreshments. Actæon could imagine himself still in the Agora of Athens. Although smaller, this was the same world as his native city. Sedate citizens had themselves carried by a slave in a wicker chair to take seats before the door of some shop to learn the news. Newsmongers circulated from group to group spreading the most stupendous lies; parasites seeking an invitation to dine flattered the rich whom they chanced to meet, and spoke ill of everything that happened; unemployed pedagogues disputed in loud tones over a point in Greek grammar, and youthful citizens grumbled against the old senators, declaring that the Republic needed newer blood.

The recent expedition against the Turdetani, and the great victory gained over them, was much discussed. They would no longer dare to raise their heads; their king Artabanes, a fugitive in the most remote of their territories, must be punished for the late defeat. And

the young Saguntines looked proudly at the trophies of lances, shields, and helmets, hanging from the pilasters of the porticos. They were the arms of some hundreds of Turdetani killed or taken prisoner on the last expedition. Furniture and ornaments stolen in the villages of the enemy by the warriors of Saguntum were offered for sale at low prices in the barber-shops. Nobody wanted them. The city was filled with such spoils. The Saguntine soldiers had returned, dragging in their wake a veritable army of loaded wagons and an interminable horde of men and beasts. As they thought of the triumph they smiled with the grim ferocity of ancient warfare, incapable of forgiving, and in which the greatest of mercies for the conquered was slavery.

The slave-market was situated near the temple where justice was administered. The slaves squatted on the ground in a circle, covered with rags, their hands clasped around their feet, their chins resting between their knees. Those born into slavery awaited the new master with the passivity of beasts, their limbs emaciated by hunger, their heads shaved and covered by a white cap. Others, more closely watched by the slave dealer, were bearded, and over their filthy hair wore crowns of branches to indicate their condition as slaves taken in war. They were Turdetani who had not given ransom. Astonishment and fury at finding themselves reduced to slavery still showed in their glowering eyes. Many of them wore chains, and on their bodies the cicatrices of the recent war were still fresh. They glared at the hostile people, contracting their mouths as if with desire to bite and some of them restlessly moved their right arms which terminated in mere formless stumps. Their hands

had been cut off in wars with tribes of the interior, whose custom it was to thus render their prisoners useless.

The Saguntines looked indifferently upon these enemies converted into chattels, into beasts, by the cruel law of conquest, and forgetting the presence of the Turdetani they discussed the city's quarrels, the rivalry of factions, which seemed to have been stifled by the intervention of the Roman legates. On the steps of a temple close at hand the bloodstains of those beheaded because of their friendship for Carthage could still be seen, and the adherents of Rome, who were in the majority, discoursed bravely and praised the energetic counsel of the envoys of the great Republic. The city would now live in peace and security under the protection of Rome.

Actæon while listening to the conversation of these various groups, glanced toward the temple and thought that he saw in the crowd streaming up and down the steps the Celtiberian shepherd who had killed the Roman legionary the night before. It was a swift vision; his dark sagum vanished in the multitude, and the Greek was uncertain if it were really he.

The morning advanced. Actæon had spent a long time in the market, and he thought that now the hour had come for occupying himself with other matters. He must see Mopsus the archer, up on the Acropolis, and he began the ascent following winding streets paved with cobbles, and lined with white houses, where in the doorways sat women spinning and weaving wool.

As the Greek approached the Acropolis, he admired the cyclopean walls of great stones laid with rare art, solidly fitted without mortar-joints. Here was the cra-

dle of the city, relic of the companions of Zacynthus as they established themselves among the rude indigenes.

He passed through a long archway, and found himself on the extensive esplanade upon the eminence, surrounded by ramparts which could shelter a population as great as Saguntum. On this immense plain, scattered at random, rose the public buildings, recalling the epoch when the city stood on the summit and had not yet descended, spreading toward the sea. From its walls one could take in the immensity of the fertile domain, the territories belonging to the Republic, reaching out of sight to the south along the shore toward the boundary of the lands occupied by the Olcades; the innumerable villages and estates, grouped on the banks of the Bætis-Perkes, and the city opening like a great white fan down the slope of the mount, enclosed by walls over which the close-packed houses seemed to spring and scatter through the orchards.

Actæon, turning his gaze toward the enclosed quarter of the Acropolis, noticed the temple of Hercules; near it the portico on which the Senate gathered; the mint where money was coined; the temple where the treasure of the Republic was stored; the arsenal where the citizens were armed; the barracks of the mercenaries; and, dominating all these buildings, the tower of Hercules, an enormous cyclopean structure which at night answered with its lights to the *speculæ* on the shore and on the hills around the port, spreading alarm or giving tranquility throughout the whole of the Saguntine territory. In another quarter a band of slaves, directed by a Grecian artist, was putting the final touches on a small

temple which Sónnica the rich was having raised on the Acropolis in honor of Minerva.

The Saguntines who were climbing up to the citadel for a quiet stroll, proudly viewing their city and taking a look at the mercenaries who were burnishing their swords and their bronze cuirasses at the doors of their barracks, glanced curiously at the Greek.

A prosperous looking Saguntine, wrapped in a red toga in Roman fashion, and leaning on a long staff, approached to speak to him. He was a middle aged man, strong, with gray hair and beard, and a kindly expression in his eyes and in his smile.

"Tell me, Greek," he asked sweetly, "why have you come hither? Are you a merchant? Are you a navigator? Do you seek for your country the silver which the Celtiberians bring us?"

"No, I am a poor man wandering about the world, and I have come to offer myself to the Republic as a soldier."

The Saguntine made a gesture of distress.

"I should have guessed it by the arm which serves you as a staff. . . .Soldiers! Always soldiers! In other times not a sword nor a dart could be seen in the city. Foreigners used to come in ships loaded with merchandise; they took what we had, and in return they gave us what they brought, and we lived in that peace of which the poets sing. But now, those who come, whether Greek or Roman, African or Asiatic, present themselves armed; ferocious dogs who come to offer themselves as guards for the flock which used to frolic in peace without fear of enemies. As I behold all this warlike preparation, as I contemplate the youths of Saguntum re-

joicing and boasting over their recent expedition against the Turdetani, I tremble for the city and the fate in store for my people. To-day we are the strongest, but will not someone come stronger than we, and clap upon our necks the chains of slavery?"

Over the top of the walls he looked down at the city with tender solicitude.

"Stranger," he continued, "my name is Alcon, and my friends call me 'the Prudent.' The old men of the Senate give heed to my counsels; but the young men will not listen to them. I have been a merchant, I have run over the world, I have a wife and children maintained in comfortable circumstances, and I am convinced that peace means felicity for the people and should be maintained at any cost."

"I am Actæon, a son of Athens. I used to be a navigator, but my ships were wrecked. I was a trader, but I lost my fortune. Mercury and Neptune have ever treated me like harsh and merciless fathers. I have enjoyed much, I have suffered still more, and to-day, almost a beggar, I come here to sell my blood and brawn."

"You do wrong, Athenian. You are a man, and you seek to turn yourself into a wolf. Do you know what I most admire in your race? . . . .that you jest at Hercules and at his deeds; that you worship Pallas Athene! You scorn force, and you worship intelligence and the arts of peace."

"The strong arm is as valuable as the head in which Zeus kindled the divine spark."

"Yes, but that arm impels the head to death."

Actæon was impatient at Alcon's words.

"Do you know Mopsus the archer?"

"There he is, near the temple of Hercules. You may recognize him by his weapons, which he never lays aside. He is another of those who drew hither the evil spirit of war."

"Farewell, Alcon."

"May the gods protect you, Athenian!"

Actæon recognized the valorous Greek by his bow and by the quiver hanging from his shoulders. He was a robust, long-bearded man, who wore bound around his gray locks a bull's tendon to renew the one which served to string his bow. His strong muscular arms revealed in the elasticity of their sinews the high tension to which they were subjected in bending the strong bow and in shooting the arrows.

He welcomed Actæon with the sympathetic respect which the Athenians inspired in the island-Greeks.

"I will speak to the Senate," he said, on learning Actæon's aspirations. "My word will be sufficient to have you received among the mercenaries with all merited distinction. Tell me more about your military exploits."

"I have made war in Lacedæmon, under the orders of Cleomenes."

"A famous captain! The renown of the deeds of the Spartan king has even reached these shores. What news of him?"

"I left him when, conquered but not mastered, he took refuge in Alexandria. There he dwelt as an exile under the protection of Ptolemy; but, according to what I heard not long ago in New Carthage, he got into trouble through a palace intrigue. The Egyptian monarch ordered his execution, and Cleomenes, with his

twelve companions, died fighting. When he fell, a pile of corpses lay before him."

"Worthy end for a hero! Where did you learn the military art?"

"I began in Sicily and Carthage, in the camps of the mercenaries, and I finished my education in the Prytaneum of Athens. My father was Lysias, captain in the service of Hamilcar, put to death afterwards by the Carthaginians in their war with the mercenaries, which is called the 'Inexpiable War.'"

"Famous schools, and an excellent father! His name also came to my ears in the epoch when I was running over the world, before taking service in Saguntum. You are welcome, Actæon! If you wish to enlist in the hoplites, you shall figure in the first rank of the phalanx with the heavy armor and the long spear. But, no, you Athenians prefer to fight light-armed. You are more to be feared in the onset than on account of the force of your blows. You shall be a peltast, with javelin and light shield; you shall fight unhampered, and surely great deeds will be related of you."

Some old men whom the archer greeted respectfully passed near.

"Those are senators," Mopsus said, "assembling because it is market day. Many of them come from their villas on the public domain, and ride up to the Acropolis in their litters. They meet on that portico."

Actæon saw them taking their seats on wooden chairs with curved claw-legs supporting the head of the Nemean lion. Their countenances and dress denoted the great diversity of races existing in the city. The men of Iberian origin came from their country-houses, bearded,

grimy, with linen cuirass lined with heavy wool, a two-edged short sword hanging from the shoulder, and a hat of hardened leather equivalent to a helmet. The Grecian merchants presented themselves with faces shaven, wrapped in white chlamys, from which the right arm emerged bare; a fillet was bound around the hair in fashion of a crown, and they were leaning on long staves tipped by the design of a pine cone. They resembled the kings of the Iliad gathered before Troy.

Actæon noted among them a giant with black beard and short curling hair which lay around his head like a mitre of wool. His enormous limbs, with protuberant muscles and elastic sinews which seemed bursting with strength, peeped from below the openings of the red mantle in which he was wrapped.

"That is Theron," said the bowman, "the great priest of Hercules; a prodigious man, who could conquer a crown in the Olympic games. He kills a bull with a single blow on its neck."

Again the Greek thought he recognized among the people gathered near the Senate portico, the Celtiberian shepherd, studying intently the gigantic priest of Hercules; but the archer addressed Actæon, compelling him to turn his gaze away.

"The council is about to sit, and I must be at the foot of the steps awaiting orders. Go, Actæon, and tarry for me in the Forum. There you will find my boy. Did you not say that you met him on the road? No doubt he was with that slave girl who herds Sónnica's goats. Don't hesitate, Actæon; don't tell a falsehood. I guess it. Ah, that boy! That vagabond, who, instead of working, races through the fields like a fugitive slave!"

In spite of the grievousness with which the archer complained, a thrill of tenderness was observable in his accent, the note of preference over his other sons for that wandering and capricious artist who often abandoned the paternal roof to roam about the port and through the mountains for weeks at a time.

The two Greeks bade each other adieu, and Actæon returned to the Forum, not without thinking that he saw again, strolling about the Acropolis, the mysterious Celtiberian shepherd. As he entered the porticos he heard hisses and shouting; the crowds were agitated, laughing and jeering; people rushed from the barber-shops and perfumeries. The Greek saw a group of luxuriously dressed young men passing with scornful smiles regardless of the tempest of hisses and sarcasm raised by their presence.

They were the gallants of Saguntum; the rich youths who imitated the fashions of the Athenian aristocracy, exaggerated by distance and by their lack of taste. Actæon also smiled, with the cynical smile of an Athenian, as he observed the crudeness with which these young fops copied their distant models.

At their head strode Lachares, the gallant who had accompanied Sónnica on her morning visit to the temple of Venus. They were dressed in transparent cloth of screaming colors and subtle weave, disclosing the body, like the tunics worn by the hetæræ at banquets. Their cheeks, carefully plucked free of hair, were tinted with soft vermilion and the eyes were enlarged with black lines. The hair, curled, and perfumed with fragrant ointments, was confined by a fillet. Some wore large hoops of gold in their ears, and hidden bracelets

jingled as they walked. Others were indolently leaning on the shoulders of small slave boys with white backs, and with hair hanging in heavy curls, resembling girls in the plumpness of their forms. As if deaf to the insults and sarcasms of the people, they talked with affected serenity of some Greek verses which one of them had composed; they discussed their merit, the manner of accompanying them with the lyre, and only stopped to caress the cheeks of their small slaves or to greet acquaintances, well pleased at heart over the scandal their presence caused in the Forum.

"Do not tell me that they imitate the Greeks," shouted an old man with malicious face, clad in the patched and filthy mantle of an unemployed pedagogue. "The fire of the gods shall be hurled upon the city. It is true that in a moment of emotion our father Zeus carried off the beautiful Ganymede; but how about Leda and all the innumerable beauties touched by the fire of the Lord of Olympus? A fine place the world would be if men were to imitate the gods and were to behave as do these fools, dressing themselves like women! Do you wish to see a Greek? Well, there is one for you. That is a true son of Hellas."

He pointed to Actæon, who found himself the target for curious glances from the assembled people.

"How you must laugh, stranger, at seeing those miserable creatures who stupidly believe they are copying your country," the beggarly phrenetic continued shouting. "I am a philosopher; do you know that? The only philosopher in Saguntum, and by the same token you will guess that these ungrateful people are quite willing to let me starve to death. As a young man I

lived in Athens; I attended the schools; I gave up the life of a mariner, and ceased running over the world, to seek truth within myself. I have invented nothing, but I know all that man has said about the soul and the world, and if you wish I will recite from memory entire paragraphs from Socrates and Plato, and all the answers of the great Diogenes. I know your country, and I am ashamed of my city when I see such fools as those. Do you know who is to blame for these follies that dishonor us? Sónnica, that Sónnica whom they call 'the rich,' an old-time courtesan who will succeed in making Saguntum a reproach, destroying the traditions of the city, and the simple, healthful customs of other times."

On hearing the name of Sónnica a murmur of protest arose from the group.

"Do you see?" shouted the philosopher, becoming more abusive. "They are adulatory slaves who tremble at the truth. The name of Sónnica produces in them the same effect as that of a goddess. Do you see that one running away? Well, not long ago Sónnica lent his father a great sum without interest, that he might buy wheat in Sicily, and so he thinks he must run away from any place where things are said against her. See that one turning his back? The courtesan freed his father, who was a slave, and he does not wish to hear anything said that might annoy Sónnica. And these others, who are more valiant, and remain staring as if they would devour me, have all received favors from her, and would like to beat me for my words as they have done before. They are slaves who defend her as if she were a beneficent divinity. There are many others like them in Saguntum, and that is why the magistrates dare not punish

that Grecian woman, who with her mad extravagances scandalizes the city. Come, beat me, shopkeepers! Beat the only one in Saguntum who does not lie!"

The crowd slunk away, leaving the philosopher shaking his fist and hurling epithets of indignation.

"What you ought to do," said one of the latter scornfully as he retired, "is to show more gratitude. If you ever get anything to eat, it is at Sónnica's table."

"I shall eat to-night, then!" shouted the philosopher insolently. "And what do you prove by that? I will tell her to her face the same that I say here! And she will laugh as usual, while you will be eating swill in your houses and thinking of her banquet!"

"Ingrate! Parasite!" exclaimed the man, turning his back contemptuously.

"Gratitude is the condition of the dog. Man shows his superiority by speaking ill of those who favor him. If you do not wish Euphobias the philosopher to be a parasite, maintain him in exchange for his wisdom."

By this time Euphobias was talking to empty space. They had all left, and had mingled with the moving crowd on the street. Only Actæon remained, examining him with interest, as if marveling at finding in a far-away city a man so like those who in Athens swarmed about the Academy, forming a class of hungry and obscure philosophic plebs.

The parasite, seeing himself with no other audience than the Greek, caught him by the arm.

"You alone deserve to hear me. One can easily perceive that you are from *there,* and that you know how to distinguish merit."

"Who is that Sónnica whose customs so anger you?

Do you know the story of her life?" asked the Athenian, desirous of hearing the history of a woman who seemed to fill the whole city with her name.

"Do I know it? A thousand times she has told me in her hours of melancholy and weariness, which outnumber all the rest. When I cannot manage to make her laugh with my wit, when she feels the need of unburdening her mind, then she tells of her past with as much abandon as though she were talking to a dog; but it is a long story."

The philosopher paused and winked one eye, pointing to a door near at hand, within which was a perforated counter holding a row of amphoræ.

"We shall be more comfortable in Fulvius' house. He is a most honorable Roman who swears that he has quarreled with water. Day before yesterday he received a famous wine from Laurona. I smell its perfume even here."

"I have not a single obolus in my pouch."

The philosopher sniffed as if inhaling the vapor of the new wine, and made a gesture of disappointment. Then he looked at the Greek affectionately.

"You are worthy to hear me; poor, like myself, surrounded by these merchants who stock their vaults with silver! Since there is to be no wine for us, let us take a walk. That clears the brain. I will treat you as Aristotle treated his favorite pupils."

Strolling along the portico Euphobias began to relate what he knew of Sónnica's life.

She was believed to have been born in Cyprus, the isle beloved of mariners. On those shores where the poets made the triumphant beauty of Aphrodite spring

from the foam, the women of the island run by night in search of mariners to offer themselves in memory of the goddess. Sónnica was the fruit of one such alligation with a rower. She vaguely recollected the early years of her childhood, running about the deck of a ship, springing from one bank of rowers to another, fed and scorned like the cats on shipboard, visiting many ports populated by people diverse in dress, customs, and language, but seeing it all from afar, and vaguely, like images in a dream, never setting foot on terra firma.

Before she became a woman she was the mistress of the owner of the ship, a pilot from Samos, who, grown tired of her, or tempted by money, sold her one night to a Bœotian who maintained a *dicterion* in the Piræus. She was not yet twelve years of age, and little Sónnica attracted special attention among the *dicteriadai* who swarmed by night in the Piræus, the chief centre of Athenian prostitution.

The floating population of the city, composed of foreigners, gamblers, and young men thrown out of their homes by severe fathers, congregated in that suburb of Athens which surrounded the ports of the Piræus and Phalerum and formed the deme of Estiron. No sooner had night closed in than the whole noisy and corrupt world gathered in the great square in the Piræus, between the citadel and the port, and prostitutes began to circulate, who with the coming of the shadows, were privileged to leave the *dicteria* in which they had been confined. On the porticos around the square the gamblers shook dice, wandering philosophers argued, vagabonds slept, mariners told of their voyages, and through this confusion of diverse peoples passed the *dicteriadai*,

with painted faces, almost nude, or wearing striped mantles of vivid colors which revealed an African or Asiatic origin. There the young daughter of Cyprus grew up and became acquainted with the world, seeking each night some wheat merchant from Bithynia, or some exporter of hides from Magna Graecia, rude and merry people, who, before returning to their native lands wished to spend some of their earnings on the courtesans of Athens. By day she was a prisoner in the *dicterion*, a house of sordid aspect, without other ornamentation on the façade than an enormous phallus which served the establishment as a sign, the door standing open at all hours without the chained dog customary at other dwellings, and displaying, immediately the heavy curtain was raised, an open courtyard, in which, near the entrance to the rooms, squatting or lying on the pavement, were all the wares of the house, women worn and consumed by the fires of concupiscence and girls barely arrived at puberty. All were nude, the dark and velvety skin of the Egyptians contrasting with the pale countenance of the Greeks and the white and silky flesh of the Asiatics.

Sónnica, who was at that time called Myrrhina, wearied of the life of the *dicterion*. All the women there were slaves whom the Bœotian beat when they allowed a customer to leave discontented. It disgusted her to take the two oboli stipulated by the laws of Solon from those calloused hands which wounded as they caressed, and she was nauseated by the dirty, brutal people from all the countries in the world who came in search of pleasure, and went away surfeited, being immediately replaced by another and another, like an incessant surg-

ing of desires excited by the solitude of the sea, repeating similar caprices and identical demands.

One night she visited for the last time the temple of Venus Pandemos raised by Solon in the great square of the Piræus, and deposited an obolus as her final offering before the statues of Venus and her companion Peitho, the two divinities of the courtesans, before whom she went many times with her lemans of the moment, before giving herself up to them on the seashore or near the long wall constructed by Themistocles to unite the port with Athens. Then she fled toward the city, eager for liberty and joy, wishing to become one of those Athenian hetæræ whose luxury and beauty she had admired from afar.

She lived like the free, poor courtesans whom the Athenian youths called "she-wolves" on account of their howling. At first she spent whole days without eating, but she considered herself more happy than her former companions of the port of Phalerum, or in the district of Estiron, slaves of the masters of the *dicteria*. Her market now was the Cerameicus, a large district of Athens, along the wall between the gates of the Cerameicus and the Dipylon, in which were the garden of the Academy and the tombs of the illustrious citizens who had died for the Republic. By day the great *hetæræ* went or sent their slaves to see if their names were written in charcoal on the wall of the Cerameicus. The Athenian who desired a courtesan would write her name, with the sum offered, and if this were to the liking of the hetæra she tarried near the inscription until the coming of the favored proponent. In broad daylight the great courtesans appeared there, almost nude, wear-

ing purple sandals, wrapped in flowered mantles, wearing crowns of fresh roses on their hair, powdered with gold. The poets, the rhetoricians, the artists, the distinguished citizens strolled through the green groves of the Cerameicus or along the porticos adorned with statues, chatting with the courtesans, having to rack their brains to keep even with their repartee.

When night came on an irruption of wretched, ragged women filled the promenade, dispersing among the tombs of the renowned dead. It consisted of the dregs of Athenian gayety which lived in liberty under cover of the darkness—old courtesans who, trusting in the night, came out to conquer bread in the same place where in other times they had reigned with the power of beauty; fugitive *dicteriadai,* slave women who had run away from their owners for a few hours, and women of the plebs seeking alleviation of their poverty. Hiding behind the tombs, among the clumps of laurels, they remained as motionless as sphinxes, and scarcely did the steps of a man disturb the silence of the Cerameicus, than from all sides arose faint howls calling to the new arrival. Frequently they fled in mad race on recognizing the official whose duty it was to collect the *pornikontelos,* a tax imposed by Solon upon the courtesans and one which constituted the largest revenue of Athens. At midnight the passer-by crossing the Cerameicus on his return from a banquet, would hear around him the rustle and whispering of an invisible world which seemed to sweep over the turf and the gleaming sand. The poets jestingly averred that the ghosts of the great departed were groaning in their capacious tombs.

Thus Myrrhina lived until she was fifteen, spending

the night in the Cerameicus and the day in the hut of an old woman of Thessaly who, in common with all her countrywomen enjoyed great fame as a witch, and assisted at births as well as sold love-philters, and retouched the faces of those who were fading.

Innumerable things the little *lupa* learned at the side of the old woman, bony and ugly as a Parca! She helped her grind the white lead which, mixed with isinglass, filled the wrinkles of the face; she prepared the bean flour to anoint the breasts and abdomen, to make the skin tight and elastic; she filled little flasks with antimony to give brilliancy to the eyes; she made a liquid preparation of carmine for coloring with light touches the paste-filled wrinkles, and she listened with profound attention to the wise counsels with which the old woman instructed her pupils, so that they might show off their particular charms to the best advantage and hide their defects. The old Thessalian advised the girls with plump bodies to use cork soles inside their shoes, and the tall ones to wear light sandals, and to shrink their heads down between their shoulders; she made pads for the thin, whalebone corsets for the stout, she stained the gray hair with soot, and those who had good teeth she obliged to carry a stalk of myrtle between their lips, counseling them to smile at the slightest word

The young girl possessed the old witch's confidence to such an extent that she assisted her in the most dangerous part of her science, the confection of love-philters and the making of charms, which had more than once caused her to be prosecuted by the officials of the Areopagus. The richest hetæræ consulted her about their desires and revenges, and she gave them the benefit of

her knowledge. To accomplish the impotence of a man or the sterility of a woman, it was only necessary to give them a glass of wine in which a barbel had been stewed; to attract a forgetful lover a cake of unleavened dough was burned in a fire made of branches of thyme and laurel; and to convert love into hatred it was only necessary to follow the man, stepping in his tracks the opposite way, placing the right foot where he had put his left, and murmuring at the same time: "I am upon you, I step on you." If one wished to cause a satiated lover to return, the old woman rolled a bronze ball which she carried in her bosom, asking Venus to cause the lover to roll in over the threshold of the door in the same manner, and if the conjury produced no effect, the wax image of the person beloved was thrown into the brazier while asking the gods to melt the frozen heart with love even as the figure melted. With these enchantments, accompanied by mysterious invocations, went philters composed of aphrodisiacs and exciting herbs, which frequently led to death.

One moonlight spring night Myrrhina had an adventure in the Cerameicus, which resulted in her abandoning the den of the Thessalian. Seated behind a tomb, her howl soft as a lament attracted a man wrapped in a white mantle. By the brilliancy of his eyes and the insecurity of his step he seemed to be intoxicated. He wore on his head a crown of withered roses.

Myrrhina divined that he was a distinguished citizen coming from a banquet. It was the poet Simalion, a young aristocrat who had won a crown in the Olympian games, and in whom Athens saw revived the inspiration of Anacreon. The richest hetæræ sang his verses

at banquets to the music of the lyre, and virtuous dames murmured them in the solitude of the gynæceum, flushing with emotion. The most famous beauties of Athens contended for the poet, and he, already an invalid in his young manhood, and unable to resist the strain of worldly adoration, took refuge in the temple of Æsculapius when the cough compelled him to spit blood; he went on a pilgrimage to the healing springs throughout Greece and the islands; and no sooner did he begin to feel stronger, with new blood surging through his veins, than, scorning the doctors, he began once more the round of banqueting with business men and artists of Attica, in company with famous hetæræ and genteel Cyprians, rolling from the arms of one to another; paying for the caresses with verses which the city afterward repeated; ever ardent, and consuming his life like the torch which at the nocturnal feasts of Dionysus was passed by the chain of bacchantes from hand to hand until lost in the infinite.

Coming from one of these orgies he met Myrrhina, and contemplating in the moonlight her youthful beauty, undimmed and almost childlike there in a place frequented by the filthy *lupas,* he raised his hand to his eyes as if he feared he were being deceived by the aberrations of intoxication. This must be Psyche with those firm, harmoniously curving breasts, round as cups; with those correct and gentle outlines which would have been the despair of sculptors at the Academy. The poet experienced the same satisfaction as when, after hours of solitary plodding along the wall of Themistocles from Athens to the port, he hit upon the culminating verse of an ode.

She started to drag him to the old Thessalian's hut, but Simalion, dazzled by the marble flesh which seemed to shine through the rags, took her to his beautiful residence on the Street of Tripods, and there Myrrhina remained like a lady, with slaves and luxurious garments.

This caprice of the poet astounded all Athens. In the Agora and in the Cerameicus they talked of nothing but Simalion's new love. They marveled at the rescue of a precious stone, forgotten and lost in the sands, which suddenly shone forth on the forehead of a grandee.

The great hetæræ, who had never succeeded in making complete conquest of the fickle poet, were amazed at seeing him devotedly attached to a young girl from a *dicterion,* who was remembered by many adventurers in the Piræus. He took her out in his chariot, driving three horses with close-cropped manes, and to all the great feasts in the temples of Attica; in the morning he composed verses in her honor, and he awoke her by reciting them, while he flung a shower of rose petals upon her couch. He gave banquets to his artist friends that he might revel in their envy and admiration, when, at their conclusion, he had her exhibit herself nude upon the table, in all the magnificence of that perfect beauty which aroused a religious emotion in the Greeks.

Faithful to Simalion from gratitude at first, and finally enamored of the poet and of his works, Myrrhina adored him as teacher as well as lover. In a short time she learned to play the lyre, to recite verses in all the known styles, she read in her lover's library so diligently that she was able to hold her own among the guests at the banquets of artists, and was invited out among the most brilliant hetæræ of Athens.

Simalion, constantly growing more enthusiastic over his beloved, dissipated his fortune and his life. He ordered for her from Asia transparent mantles embroidered with fantastic flowers, through which shone her pearly flesh; gold dust to sprinkle upon her hair, making her like the goddesses, which the poets and artists of Greece always painted blonde; he charged the navigators to buy roses in Egypt of marvelous freshness. He was steadily growing more emaciated, his skin more pallid, and his gaze glowing with fever, coughing and lying in the arms of his mistress, his strength slipping away.

Thus two years passed, until one autumn afternoon, stretched on the lawn in his garden, his head resting on the knees of his beautiful inamorata, he heard his verses sung for the last time by the clear voice of Myrrhina, accompanied by the fluttering of her white fingers over the chords of the lyre. The setting sun caused Minerva's lance aloft by the Parthenon, dominating the city, to glow like a coal of fire; his boyish hand could scarce sustain the golden cup of honey and wine. He made an effort to kiss his mistress; the roses which crowned him fell apart, covering Myrrhina's breast with a shower of petals, and, uttering a plaint like that of a woman, he closed his eyes, falling upon that breast where he had lavished the last strength of his life.

The young girl wept for him with the desperation of a widow. She cut her splendid hair to lay it as an offering upon his tomb. She put aside her dazzling costumes, she dressed in dark wool like the Athenian women of virtuous homes, and remained in retirement in her house, which she kept closed and silent as a gynæceum.

The necessity of living, of maintaining the luxury to which she had become accustomed, of keeping a chariot and slaves and grooms, forced her, however, to consider her beauty, and the most celebrated hetæræ became alarmed at the new rival. Covered with a dark red wig to hide the tonsure of mourning, wrapped in fine veils from which her throat emerged adorned with pearls, her fresh and alabastrine arms loaded to the shoulders with bracelets, she showed herself at an upper window of her house with the grave majesty of a goddess awaiting veneration. The richest men of Athens paused by night in the Street of Tripods to gaze at the poet's widow, as the women in the Cermaeicus sarcastically called her. Some, more daring, or tremulous with desire, raised the index finger in mute question; but vainly they awaited her affirmative reply—the customary sigil of the hetæræ, touching thumb to index finger as it were an annulus.

Few managed to gain entrance to the famous courtesan's house. They grumbled that some nights, in moments of tedium, she had opened her door to young students who were modeling their first statues in the gardens of the Academy, or reciting their unrenowned verses to the idle in the Agora—youths who could only afford to spend on pleasures a few oboli, or at most a drachma. On the other hand the rich, who offered golden stateres or several minæ to enter the house, were considered too poor to win favor. The old courtesans whispered into one another's ears, with a degree of respect, that a petty Asiatic king, on passing through Athens, had given Myrrhina two talents for one visit—as much as any republic in Greece would spend in a

year—and that the beautiful hetæra, unmoved by such a fortune, had suffered his presence only while her clepsydra emptied itself once, for, tired of men, she measured prurience by her water-clock.

Fabulously rich merchants, on arriving at the Piræus, sought access to Myrrhina's house through the good offices of friends. They heaped presents upon the vagabond artists who were the courtesan's familiars, that they might be admitted to her suppers; and more than one, arriving at the port with a fleet loaded with rich merchandise, hastened to sell everything without waiting to discharge his cargo, so that he might stay in the poet's house; and he returned to his country with the help of charity, content with his poverty when he saw the envy and respect which he inspired among his companions.

Thus she met Bomaro, a young Iberian merchant from Zacynthus, who had come to Athens with three ships laden with hides. The courtesan was attracted by his sweetness, which contrasted with the rudeness of the other merchants brutalized by their contact with the great ports. He spoke little and blushed, as if the silence of his long stays at sea had given him the timidity of a virgin. If she forced him to relate his adventures as a navigator he did so with simplicity, without mentioning the dangers he encountered. He displayed particularly a childish admiration for Grecian culture.

Myrrhina, during the supper at which she saw him for the first time, surprised his eyes fixed on her with the expression of tenderness and respect of one gazing at a goddess impossible of possession. The navigator, reared among barbarians, in a remote colony scarcely

retaining traces of its mother Greece, began to interest the courtesan more than the young Athenians and opulent merchants who surrounded her. Tremulous and hesitant he craved the grace of a single night, and spent it near her with more admiration than enjoyment, adoring her regal beauty, thrilled by her voice, put to sleep by it like a warm maternal lullaby, accompanied by the lyre.

When he awoke he begged to turn over to her the entire product of his cargo; but Myrrhina, hardly knowing why, refused to accept it, in spite of his urging. He was rich; he had no parents; far away in that land of barbarians he possessed immense flocks, hundreds of slaves who cultivated his fields or worked in his mines; great potteries, and many ships like the three which awaited him in the Piræus; and seeing that the courtesan, with kindly smile, treated him like a generous boy, declining to accept his money, he bought in the Street of the Goldsmiths a prodigious collar of pearls, the despair of the hetæræ, and sent it to Myrrhina before he left the city.

Afterwards he came back many times. He could not decide to return to his country. He set sail with his flotilla, but in the next port he took on a cargo for Athens, paying no regard to the price, and scarcely came to anchor in the Piræus before he rushed to the courtesan's house, nor could resolve to leave until he suspected Myrrhina's weariness of his presence.

The courtesan finally became accustomed to this submissive lover, ever at her feet, who was ready to die for her, showing his adoration with the fervor of a foreigner, so different from the cynical and mocking court-

esy of the Athenians. She called him "little brother," and this word, which the hetæræ used with young lovers, gradually took on her lips a warmth of sincere affection. When he was delayed in returning from the islands she longed for his presence, and when she saw him at the door she ran to him with outstretched arms, in a transport of joy such as her other friends never witnessed.

She did not love him as she had loved the poet, but the earnest humility of Bomaro, his respectful and docile love, so different from the ardor she inspired in others, moved Myrrhina to a sentiment of gratitude.

One night, the Iberian, who seemed preoccupied, ventured after much vacillation to express his inner thought.

He could not live without her; he would never return alone to Zacynthus; he was resolved to abandon his fortune rather than never to see her more. He would sooner be a stevedore on the wharf at Phalerum; and finally, like one who makes a dash to more quickly overcome an obstacle, he abruptly proposed to make her his wife, turning his fortune over to her, and to take her to smiling Zacynthus with its flowery fields and its rose-colored mountains, so like those of Attica.

Myrrhina smiled while listening to him and her heart was touched by the affectionate self-abnegation of the Iberian who, to unite with her forever, was willing to overlook a shameful past in the *dicterion* and in the Cerameicus. She rejected his proposals with an ironical smile; but Bomaro was persistent. Was she not tired of her mode of life, of seeing herself flattered as a thing of great price, but often scorned by coarse creatures who thought they made themselves her masters by merely of-

fering their gold? Would she not like to be a sovereign on the coasts of Iberia, surrounded by people who would admire her Athenian attainments?

Bomaro conquered her by his loving determination, and one day Athens beheld with surprise that the house on the Street of Tripods was sold, and that Myrrhina's slaves were carrying to the port the riches gathered during three years of mad fortune, loading them in the ships of the Iberian who had unfurled from the masts his purple sails for a triumphal voyage.

Myrrhina, in her desire to propitiate him who gave himself up to her so completely, wished to leave her whole past behind. She proposed to be a new woman, to put away her sinister cognomen, and begging Bomaro to repeat the most beautiful names of the Iberian women, she chose that of Sónnica as the most pleasing to her ears.

Arrived at Zacynthus, the navigator and the Greek woman were married in the temple of Diana before all the Senate, of which the young man was himself a member.

The city felt the effects of the charm which seemed to emanate from the person of Sónnica. She was like a breath from distant Athens, which fascinated the Greek merchants in Saguntum, grown slack by their long stay among uncultured foreigners.

At the banquets, at the hour of sweet wines, when she sang the hymns of the great masters, the Saguntine youths from the ward of the Greeks were impelled to fall at her feet and adore her as a goddess. After being married a year Bomaro realized in the growth of his fortune the assistance of the woman, who, in changing

her environment, began to interest herself in material things through her desire to prove her worth before the noble dames who gossipped about her.

She watched the work in the fields, took note of the great flocks, and the potteries; she went to the port to greet the arrival of the ships; and Bomaro's enormous fortune increased. Excellent results followed the business ventures which she counseled, as she lay in the shade of a clump of laurel in her garden, speaking in a slow harmonious voice, caressed by a feather fan in the hands of a slave.

Bomaro, the days of more ardent love-making ended, sailed along the coasts of Iberia, his mind free from business cares, and desirous of adding to the fortune which Sónnica administered so well. She had surrounded herself by a court of youths who treated her as a preceptress. The young Greeks born in Saguntum flocked about her to learn the manners and customs of Athens, which was their perpetual dream. The evil tongues in the city called her Sónnica the Cyprian, but the plebs who were the recipients of her charity, and the small merchants who never appealed to her without result, entitled her Sónnica the rich, and they were ready to fight those who spoke ill of her.

One winter, four years after their marriage, Bomaro perished by shipwreck near the Pillars of Hercules, and Sónnica found herself in absolute possession of an immense fortune, and mistress of a whole city, over which she reigned by virtue of her riches and of her kindness of heart. She freed slaves in memory of the unfortunate navigator, she sent costly offerings to all the temples in Saguntum, she raised on the Acropolis a

cenotaph in memory of Bomaro, summoning marble-workers from Athens for this purpose. By her charities she won consideration, bringing this city of sturdy and austere customs to tolerate her bright, mirth-loving existence, which was a perpetuation of Athenian manners in the midst of Iberic sobriety.

Having passed the period of mourning, she gave suppers in her country-house which lasted until dawn. She brought famous auletai from Attica who set the Saguntine youths wild with their flutes. She sent ships on voyages with no other commercial object than to bring rare perfumes from Asia, fabrics from Egypt, and unique adornments from Carthage; and her fame extended so far into the interior that kinglets from Celtiberia were drawn to Saguntum to behold that wonderful woman, as wise as a priestess, and as beautiful as a divinity. The Greeks admired her, observing that she strengthened the prestige of their race among the primitive Saguntines, who were lavish with eulogy of her disinterestedness. Thus she lived! No women entered her house, none but flute-players, dancers, and slaves; she was surrounded by men who yearned for her, but she held herself aloof, and treated them all with a masculine but distant intimacy. She was ever thinking of Athens the luminous, the city which held so many memories, and many of whose customs she sought to revive.

Euphobias the philosopher, as he reached this point in his story, stoutly declared that Sónnica's life in Saguntum was above reproach, in spite of what the Greek women of the district of the merchants said. He himself, who possessed the bitterest tongue in the city, affirmed it. Several times she had been attracted toward some

guest at her dinners. Alorcus, the scion of a petty king of Celtiberia, who lived in Saguntum and frequented her house, had made an impression upon her with his wild, virile beauty, as a son of the mountains; but Sónnica held him back, plainly fearing to take the step and unite herself with one of a barbarous race. The memory of Attica wholly occupied her imagination. If some young Athenian had landed on those shores, some youth as beautiful as Alcibiades, singing verses, modeling statues, and displaying skill and dexterity as in the Olympian games, perhaps she might have fallen into his arms, but her emotions were unstirred among the arrogant Celtiberians who came to her feasts smelling of horses and with their swords girded at their sides, and among the effeminate sons of merchants, becurled, and shedding perfumes, caressing their small slave boys, who accompanied them even in the bath.

"Athenian," continued the philosopher, "you should present yourself to Sónnica. She will receive you kindly. You are not an ephebus," he added, with a mocking smile; "your beard is turning gray, but you have in your figure the arrogance of a king in the Iliad; upon your forehead something of the majesty of Socrates; and who knows but that you may fall heir to Bomaro's riches! If that should come to pass, do not forget the poor philosopher. I will be content with a skin of wine from Laurona, since to-day you condemn me to thirst."

Euphobias laughed, slapping Actæon on the shoulder.

"I am invited to Sónnica's banquet to-night," said the Greek.

"You, also? Then we shall meet there. I am not invited, but I go with the same right as a dog belonging to the house."

The philosopher saw Alcon, the peaceful citizen, who had just come down from the Acropolis, pass through the centre of the Forum.

"There is one of the few good men of this city. He extols virtue to me, he counsels me to go to work, and to forget philosophy, and on top of all that he never fails to give me something to drink; so farewell until to-night, stranger."

He hurried toward Alcon who, leaning on his staff, greeted him with a kindly smile.

Actæon, finding himself once more alone wandered through the centre of the market. Suddenly he heard a youthful voice calling him. It was Rhanto, sitting on the ground among the pitchers which were now empty of milk, selling her last cheeses. Near her squatted the young potter. They were eating a hard cake with fresh, juicy onions, playfully disputing the mouthfuls amid merry laughter. The shepherdess offered Actæon a round cake, and the Greek accepted gratefully. He seemed destined to receive his food in Saguntum from feminine hands. Twice since he landed he had been succored by women.

Seated between the young people he saw the market gradually become deserted. The shepherds drove their flocks toward the Gate of the Sea; the Celtiberian chiefs, bearing their women behind them on their horses, rode off at a gallop, eager to reach their villages in the mountains; and the empty carts rumbled slowly toward the hamlets and towers in the Saguntine domain.

Again Actæon saw the Celtiberian shepherd in the colonnades, moving from one group of rustics to another, listening to their conversation. As he passed near the

Greek he gazed at him with those enigmatic eyes which awoke within him shadowy recollections.

All at once the young potter arose and started to run, hiding behind the columns around the Forum.

"He has seen his father," said Rhanto quietly. "There is Mopsus coming down from the Acropolis."

Actæon advanced to meet the archer.

"My word has been sufficient to have you received by the Senate. The city will soon need good soldiers like yourself. The elders seemed somewhat alarmed this morning. They fear Hannibal, that young cub of Hamilcar, who now leads the Carthaginians, and who will not calmly brook our friendship with the Romans and the execution of his sympathizers in Saguntum. Here, take this; it is the advance pay which the Republic allows you."

He tendered Actæon a handful of coins, which the Greek put into his pouch. Mopsus then invited him to his house to meet his sons and to dine; but the Athenian was obliged to plead his previous invitation to Sónnica's banquet.

When the archer had left, Actæon felt the torment of thirst, and, remembering the philosopher's recommendations, he entered the establishment of the Roman whose Lauronian wine inspired so much enthusiasm in Euphobias. At the counter he changed a victoriatus, and was given a boat-shaped terra cotta patera full of black wine crowned with iridescent bubbles. Two soldiers were drinking in a corner of the tavern—two rough mercenaries with the faces of bandits. One was an Iberian, the other with bronzed skin and athletic frame looked like a Libyan, and his cheeks, calloused by

the helmet, and his neck and arms furrowed with cicatrices, denoted the professional paid warrior who had fought with indifference since childhood, now in the service of one nation and now in that of its adversary.

"I am in the service of Saguntum," said the Libyan. "These merchants pay better than those of Carthage. But, believe me, although content to live in this town, I realize that they have done an unlucky thing in displeasing Hannibal. Rome is strong, but Rome is far away, and that lion's whelp prowls only a few days' journey from here. You ought to have known him, to have seen him from boyhood as I have done when I was fighting under the orders of his father Hamilcar! He runs like a mare; he fights as well on foot as on horseback, he eats what there is to be had, or he eats nothing at all; he goes about dressed like a slave; arms are his only luxury; he sleeps on the ground, and often, at daybreak, his father would find him lying among the sentinels of the camp. He is not content to be told about things, he must see everything with his own eyes, and mix with the enemy to study their weak points close at hand. Often Hasdrubal, his sister's husband, was surprised by seeing an old beggar come into his shop, and he would shout with laughter when Hannibal pulled off his wig and his rags, under cover of which he had been spending hours among the enemy."

Actæon left the tavern hastily on seeing that Rhanto, after handing her pitchers to a slave who loaded them into a cart, was starting on her walk toward Sónnica's villa.

"I will go with you, little one. You shall be my guide to your mistress' house."

The sun had begun to set. The afternoon light gilded the foliage of the domain, giving a transparency of amber to the leaves and vines. Along the highway through the champaign sounded the bells of the flock, the creaking of carts, and the sonorous songs of the rustics returning from the city.

They arrived at Sónnica's villa, which had the aspect of a town. They first passed the dwellings of the slaves, where buzzed around the doorways a swarm of nude children with prominent abdomens, and with the umbilicus protruding like buttons; then the stables, from which floated a warm vapor vibrant with lowing and whinnying; the granaries and farmhouses; the dwelling of the overseer; the calabooses for rebellious slaves, with their breathing-holes on a level with the ground; the pigeon-house, a high tower of red brick around which fluttered a cloud of white wings amid incessant cooing; the big straw huts which served to shelter the hundreds of chickens; and, behind this row of buildings, the country-seat, Sónnica's villa, which was discussed with admiration even among the most remote tribes of Celtiberia. It was surrounded by cypresses and laurels, encircled by walls covered with gnarled grape vines, while rising above the great mass of foliage were its rose-colored walls with columns and friezes of blue marble and the terrace crowned by polychrome statues with enameled eyes shining in the sun like precious stones.

Actæon was silent and preoccupied. Rhanto had been talking to him for full half an hour without receiving a reply.

"Look, stranger! All those fields which your eye can see belong to Sónnica. See, Greek, how many chick-

ens! Nearly all the eggs used in the city come from here."

Actæon continued oblivious to the objects pointed out by the shepherdess; but just as she rang the bell on the garden gate, and was answered from within by the barking of dogs and the sharp cries of hidden birds, he smote himself nervously on the forehead as if he had made a discovery.

"Now I know who he is!" he exclaimed, as if awaking from a dream.

"Who?" asked the young girl in surprise.

"Nobody," he replied with the frigidity of him who fears that he has said too much.

In his own mind, however, he was satisfied with the identification. Recalling the words of the Libyan mercenary, overheard in the tavern, had brought back to his memory that enigmatic figure of the Celtiberian shepherd. Suddenly a light was kindled in his thought.

Now he knew who it was! For a good reason had he been impressed from the first moment by the glance of that unknown man, by the eyes which never change in a countenance despite the passing of years. Often had he seen those eyes in his childhood when his father made war in Sicily with Hamilcar, and he himself was being educated in Carthage.

That shepherd was Hannibal!

CHAPTER III

DANCING GIRLS FROM GADES

Sonnica awoke two hours after midday. The oblique rays of the sun filtered through the gilded bars of her window over which crept the foliage of grapevines. Its light heightened the color of the stucco frames around scenes from the Olympian games painted on the wall, and of the columns of rose-colored marble which flanked the doorway.

The beautiful Greek threw to the floor the covers of white Sætabis linen, and her first glance swept her figure, taking in the outlines of her body with affectionate eyes, from her swelling bosom curving in harmonious lines, to the tips of her rosy feet.

Her heavy hair perfumed and falling in silky curls, hung down over her body, enveloping her as in a regal mantle, caressing her from throat to knees with a gentle kiss. The old-time courtesan, as she awoke, admired her body with the adoration inspired in her by the eulogies of the artists of Athens.

She was still young and beautiful; she could still thrill men with emotion when, at the end of a banquet, she displayed herself upon the table nude as Phryne. Her hands eager for the thrilling touch of her beauty, caressed her firm round throat, the pearly globes terminating in a soft rose petal, testing their firm elasticity, and

the winding network of slender blue veins delicately outlined beneath the satiny skin, flowing down, down—in line with the strongly incurved waist; the rotund hips the slightly rounded abdomen, like that of a crater, and the limbs the harmonious proportions of which had been compared in other times to the elephant's trunk by the Asiatic merchants who visited her in Athens.

Passion had swept its fiery tongue over her without consuming her; she had lived in the midst of its ardor, cold, emotionless, and white, like a marble statue in the warmth of the sun. Seeing herself young, still beautiful, and with a virginal freshness, she smiled, pleased with herself, content with life.

"Odacis! Odacis!"

At the echo of her voice there entered a Celtiberian slave, tall, spare, strong, whom the Greek valued highly for the gentleness with which she combed her hair.

Supporting herself on the shoulders of the slave, she raised up and sprang from the couch to enter the bath.

Her nude form was invested by her hair like a transparent, golden veil. As her bare feet pressed the mosaic, which depicted the Judgment of Paris, the chill of the tiles with its agreeable shock brought a smile to her lips; her laugh deepened the dimples in her cheeks, and the reaction caused the curves of her body to quiver with gentle undulations.

She descended three steps and threw herself into the jasper piscina swinging her arms and splashing the water into tiny pearls. In the green pool her body assumed an ideal transparency, the glow of a fantastic apparition, and she moved from one side of the tank to the other like a siren with pearly back and floating hair.

"Who has come, Odacis?" she asked, lying deep in the bath.

"The women from Gades, who danced last night, have arrived. Polyanthus has given them lodgings near the kitchens."

"And who else?"

"A moment ago the stranger from Athens, whom you met this morning at the temple of Aphrodite. I have had him go into the library, and I have forgotten none of the duties of hospitality. He has just come from the bath."

Sónnica smiled, recalling the meeting that morning. She had slept badly. She attributed it to the wakeful night spent with friends on the terrace of the villa, and to the capricious journey to the port before sunrise; but she thought with some confusion of the impression made in her mind by the Athenian's figure, which had reappeared several times in her dreams. Without knowing why she associated Actæon's appearance with that of Zeus when he came to earth in mortal form in search of human love.

In her moments of tedium in Athens, when she used to submit with repugnance to caresses for piles of gold, she experienced the vague desire of being loved by a god. She thought of Leda, of Psyche, even of the effeminate Ganymede beloved of the guests on Olympus, and she was in despair at the impossibility of finding a god who should transport her captive through a mysterious forest, or along some roadway leading to the unknown. She longed to contemplate her image in the depths of eyes animated by the splendor of the infinite;

to kiss a mouth which served as a portal to supreme wisdom; to feel herself imprisoned in arms possessed of the immense strength of omnipotence. She had experienced a suggestion of this joy in loving her poet, who was sometimes as majestic and sublime as a divine being; but the simplicity of youth prevented her appreciation of that joy, and now, in her maturity, she only met men like those she had known in Athens, some rude and brutal, others effeminate and captious, lacking the severe and sovereign beauty she admired in statues.

She left her bath breathing with happy, childlike thrills, while her hair scattered a light shower at every step.

Odacis called, and three slaves entered; they were those who assisted at their mistress' toilet, the *tractatrices* in charge of the massage of the body.

Sónnica allowed herself to be manipulated by the three women who rubbed her vigorously, stretching her limbs to keep them supple and agile. Then she seated herself in a marble chair, resting her pink elbows on the dolphins which formed the arms of the seat, and in this position, erect and motionless, she waited for the slaves to proceed with the toilet.

One who was almost a child, wrapped in a mantle of broad stripes, knelt on the floor holding a great engraved bronze mirror in which Sónnica gazed at herself down to her thighs. Another arranged the toilet articles on the tables, and Odacis began to smooth her mistress' splendid hair with ivory combs. Meanwhile, the other slave approached with a bronze patera filled with a gray ointment. It was the bean-flour used by the Athenians of refinement to preserve the skin firm and elastic.

She anointed Sónnica's cheeks with this, and then the prominent breasts, the abdomen, the thighs, and knees, leaving nearly the whole body covered by a lustrous, unctuous coating. Where hair had a tendency to grow, she applied dropax, a depilatory paste, composed of vinegar and earth from Cyprus.

Sónnica passively assisted these toilet preparations, which made her momentarily ugly in order that she might reappear each day more beautiful.

Odacis continued combing her hair. She lifted the splendid tresses, burying both hands in the brilliant cascade; she gently wound it over her arms like an enormous golden serpent; then she shook it out, dividing it into small locks to dry it, and then she smoothed it lovingly with the ivory combs piled on the table near at hand, veritable prodigies of art, with the finest of teeth, their upper parts engraved with scenes representing forests, arrogant nymphs in pursuit of stags, and malodorous satyrs giving chase to nude beauties. After drying the hair the coiffeur proceeded to dye it. With a small, long-necked amphora she moistened it with a solution of saffron and gum arabic, and opening a little chest of gold dust she sprinkled it over the ample, silky skein, which assumed the brilliancy of the sun's rays. Then twisting the locks above her forehead around an iron heated over a small brazier, she formed tight curls which covered the Greek woman's brow almost to her eyes; she gathered the mass of hair at the neck, tying it with a red ribbon firmly interbraided, and she curled the crown of the coiffure, imitating the spiral flames of a torch.

Sónnica arose. Two of the slaves approached with

a heavy earthen amphora of milk, and dipping a sponge into it, they washed their mistress' body as she stood near the piscina, to remove the bean-paste. The glossy whiteness of her skin reappeared more fresh and moist.

Odacis, with silver tweezers in her hand, carefully inspected her mistress' body, with the attentive and frowning brow of the artist preparing a great work. She had charge of the depilation; her skillful hand won praise for its gentleness as it obstinately sought out the lightest down, implacably destroying it with her tweezers, in deference to the Greek custom of imitating the polished smoothness of the statues.

Sónnica being again seated in her ivory chair, the touching up of the face began. On the table near at hand was a formidable array of bottles, alabaster vases, pots of bronze and of silver, little caskets of ivory and gold, all engraved, brilliant, covered with delicate figures, ornamented with precious stones, containing Egyptian and Hebraic essences, balsams from Arabia, perfumes and intoxicating cosmetics brought by caravans from the heart of Asia to Phœnician ports, and thence to Greece or Carthage, bought for Sónnica by the pilots of her vessels in their venturesome trading voyages.

Odacis painted her face white, and then, moistening a small wooden style with attar of roses, she thrust it into a bronze pot decorated with garlands of lotus and filled with a dark powder. It was the kohol, sold by Egyptian merchants at a fabulous price. The slave applied the point of the style to the Greek's eyelids, dyeing them an intense black, and tracing a fine line about the corners, which made them appear larger and softer.

The toilet was almost complete. The slaves were opening the innumerable bottles and vases arranged in rows upon the marble table, and the atmosphere of the room was laden with costly perfumes—spikenard from Sicily, incense and myrrh from Judea, aloes from India, and cumin from Greece. Odacis took a small glass amphora inlaid with gold, with a conical stopper, terminating in a fine point which served to deposit antimony above the eyes to brighten them, and, after finishing this operation, she presented to her mistress the three ointments for imparting color to the skin in different shades —vermilion, carmine, and the Egyptian red extracted from the body of the crocodile.

The slave began delicately coloring her mistress' body with a fine brush. She produced a pink flush on her cheeks and dainty ears; she marked rose petals on her bosom, and she colored her elbows and the harmoniously curving relievo of her dimpled sides. Then, with Egyptian red, she colored one by one the nails of her fingers and toes, while another slave put on her white sandals with papyrus soles and buckles of gold. Perfumes were showered upon her, each on a different part of the body, so that it might resemble a bouquet of flowers in which various aromas were mingled. Odacis presented the jewel-casket, within which precious stones lay shimmering like restless and glistening fish. The Greek woman's pointed fingers lifted with indifference the heap of collars, rings, and pendants, which, like all Grecian jewelry, were more valuable on account of the workmanship of the artists than for the richness of the material. Scenes from the great poems were reproduced almost microscopically in carnelian cameos,

onyx, and agate, and the emeralds, topazes, and amethysts were decorated with profiles of goddesses and heroes.

The slave clasped a necklace of stones of complicated design upon Sónnica's uncovered breast; she loaded her fingers to the tips with rings, and the whiteness of her arms seemed more diaphanous girdled here and there by wide bracelets of gold. To add more expression to the countenance, Odacis decorated her mistress with small patches, and then she proceeded to bind around her body the fascia, or corset of the epoch, a broad wollen band to support the breast. Sónnica, gazing into the burnished bronze, smiled at her statue-like reflection, as beautiful as Venus in repose.

"Which costume, my mistress?" asked Odacis. "Do you wish the tunic with the golden flowers brought from Crete, or the *kalásiris* veils, transparent as air, which you ordered bought in Alexandria?"

Sónnica could not decide. She would choose in the vestiary; and in the majesty of her unveiled beauty, her papyrus sandals rustling, she walked from her dormitory followed by her slaves.

Meanwhile Actæon was waiting in the library. He had visited great palaces in his travels about the world, he had seen—two years before the earthquake which ruined it—the celebrated Colossus of Rhodes; he was familiar with the Serapeum and the tomb of the great conqueror in Alexandria; he was accustomed to elegance and splendor; yet he could not conceal surprise at this Grecian house in a barbarian land, more luxurious and artistic than those of opulent citizens of Athens.

Guided by a slave, and leaving the garden with its

whispering foliage and its cries of exotic birds, he had passed along the colonnade which gave entrance to the villa. First the vestibule with its plinth of mosaic, on which were painted ferocious black dogs with fiery eyes, their fierce and foaming mouths agape, their fangs erect.

Above the door, fastened to a lamp, hung a branch of laurel in honor of the tutelary gods of the house. Next to the somewhat gloomy vestibule, beneath the open sky, like a lung of the house, was the atrium with its four rows of columns supporting the roof and forming an equal number of cloisters, upon which opened the doors of the rooms, their three panels decorated with large-headed nails.

In the centre of the atrium was the impluvium, a rectangular marble tank to catch and hold the waters from the roof. Great terra cotta urns covered with flowers stood upon pedestals between the columns; four marble tables sustained by winged lions surrounded the impluvium, and near it rose a statuette of Love which on festive days threw a spray of water.

Actæon admired the graceful strength of the columns wrought in blue marble to match the socles of the galleries, which imparted to the light of the atrium a diffused radiance, as if the dwelling were submerged in the sea.

Afterward the attendant turned him over to Odacis, the favorite slave, and she ushered him into the peristyle, an inner courtyard much larger than the atrium, which astonished the Greek with its polychrome decoration. The columns were painted red at their bases, and the color changed above into blue and gold on the

fluting and capitals, and was dispersed over the trellis-work covering the porticos. In the unroofed part of the peristyle was a deep piscina of transparent water in which fish darted like flashes of golden lightning. Around it were marble benches supported by Hermæ; tables held by dolphins with knotted tails; clumps of roses, between the foliage of which peeped white or terra cotta statuettes in voluptuous positions, and covering the walls of the peristyle, between the doors of the rooms, were great paintings by Grecian artists—Orpheus with his heavy lyre, nude and wearing his Phrygian cap, surrounded by lions and panthers who listened to his songs with humbled heads, stifling their growls; Venus springing from the waves; Adonis allowing himself to be cured of his wounds by the Mother of Love; and other scenes eulogizing the influence of art and beauty.

Actæon was conducted to the bath by two young slaves, and as he emerged from this he again met Odacis, who bade him enter the library beyond the peristyle.

It was a great room paved with mosaic representing the triumph of Bacchus. The young god, beautiful as a woman, nude, and crowned with vines and roses, was riding on a panther, waving his thyrsus. The pictures on the walls illustrated famous passages from the Iliad. The more voluminous books were ranged on shelves, and the smaller ones formed bundles placed in narrow willow baskets lined with wool.

Actæon admired the richness of the library, where he counted more than a hundred volumes. They represented a veritable fortune. The navigators received from Sónnica commissions to bring her whatever notable

works they found on their voyages, and the booksellers in Athens remitted to her famous books of entertainment which enjoyed vogue in their city. They were all of papyrus, consisting of strips rolled upon cylinders of wood or bone, each end wrought into an artistically carved *umbilicus*. The sheets, written only on one side, were impregnated on the other with cedar oil to protect them from moths, and the title of the book, the name of the author, and the index, gleamed in letters of minium and gold on the purple outer wrapping. The copying of these books represented the life work of many men, productions to be acquired only at the cost of great sums of money, and the Greek, with the respect characteristic of his race for art and wisdom, recognized that he was surrounded in the silence of the library by the august shades of many great men, and with veneration he turned from the Homer in its old, time-worn papyrus, and the works of Thales and Pythagoras, to the contemporary poets, Theocritus and Callimachus, whose volumes were unrolled, denoting recent reading.

Actæon's ear caught a faint rustling of sandals in the peristyle, and the square of pale gold thrown on the floor by the light entering the doorway from the courtyard was darkened by a form. It was Sónnica arrayed in a gauzy white tunic. The light behind her marked the artistic lines of her body in the diaphanous cloud of her garment.

"Welcome, Athenian!" she said, in a studied but harmonious voice. "Those who come from over *there* are ever masters in my house. The banquet to-night shall be in your honor, for no one can be king of the feast and direct conversation like a son of Athens."

Actæon, somewhat stirred by the presence of a beautiful woman enveloped by intoxicating perfumes, began to speak of her house, of his astonishment at its magnificence in that barbarian land, and of the admiration which its owner enjoyed in the city. Everyone he met had spoken to him of Sónnica the rich!

"Yes, they like me; yet sometimes they censure me; but let us speak of you, Actæon; tell me who you are. Your life must be as interesting as that of old Ulysses. Tell me first what new thing there is in Athens."

For a long time the two Greeks maintained an incessant chattering. She was eager to know what courtesans triumphed in the Cerameicus and set the fashions; merry, unconsciously harking back to the life of old, forgetful of her princely opulence in Saguntum, as if she were still in the house in the Street of Tripods, and Actæon one of the poor artists who visited her of an afternoon to discuss affairs of the city, in the intimacy of comrades. She laughed at the latest witticisms of the idlers in the Agora, at the song in vogue the year before, when Actæon left Athens; and with frowning brow and the gravity of a goddess, she listened to a detailed relation of the recent changes of fashion and of the style of coiffure used by the most celebrated hetæræ.

The curiosity of the exiled Athenian being satisfied, she longed to penetrate the adventurous life of her guest, and Actæon told his story simply. Born in Athens, he had been taken to Carthage at twelve years of age. His father, in the service of the African republic, fought with Hamilcar in Sicily. In a village in the interior the selfsame slave attended the son of the Greek mercenary and a lion-cub of Hamilcar, who was

at that time only four years of age. It was Hannibal. The Athenian recalled the blows he had often dealt the savage youngster in exchange for bites with which the African surprised him in the midst of their games. The revolt of the mercenaries broke out with those horrors which gave it the name of "the truceless war," and his father, who had remained faithful to Carthage and would not take up arms with his companions, was despite his loyalty crucified by the Carthaginian populace, who, forgetting his wounds received in the service of the Republic, saw in him only a foreigner, a friend of Hamilcar who was hated by the partisans of Hanno. The son miraculously escaped these red-handed reprisals; and Hamilcar's faithful slave smuggled him aboard ship for Athens.

There, under the protection of relatives, he received the education of all young Greeks. He won prizes in the Gymnasium, in wrestling, in running, and in throwing the discus; he learned to ride unbridled horses bareback, balancing himself merely by resting his toe in a groove of the lance; to temper the rudeness of this education he was taught to play the lyre and to sing verses in diverse styles, and being strong of body and mind, he was sent, as were all Athenian youths, to pass his military apprenticeship in the garrisons on the frontier.

The monotony of this existence bored him; it was dull, and he loved pleasure; the blood of his forefathers, soldiers of fortune all, surged through his body; and he ran away from Africa to take charge of a fishing fleet in the Euxine Sea. Then he became a navigator, trading on land and sea; his caravans threaded Asia,

through warlike tribes, and among peoples who dwelt in the lethargy of a remote and decadent civilization. He was a powerful personage in the court of some tyrants who admired him on seeing him drink at a gulp an amphora of perfumed wine, and overcome the giants of the guard in a boxing match with the agile dexterity of a true Athenian; and, loaded with riches, he built a palace in Rhodes near the sea, and he gave banquets which lasted three days and nights. The earthquake which flung down the Colossus, also destroyed his fortune; his ships were sunk, his warehouses full of merchandise disappeared beneath the waves, and he began again his pilgrimage roundabout the world; in some places he was a singing master, in others a military instructor of the young men, until, attracted by the Spartan war, he enlisted in the army of Cleomenes, the last Greek hero, accompanying him at the moment in which, vanquished, he embarked for Alexandria. Poor, disappointed, convinced that riches would never return to him, saddened at seeing the whole world filled with the names of Carthage and Rome, while that of Greece was sinking into oblivion, he had come to take final refuge in Saguntum, the small and almost unknown Republic, in search of bread and of peace. Perhaps, in this retired spot, if war did not disturb its calm, he would write the history of his adventures.

Sónnica followed his narrative with interest, fixing upon Actæon a glance of sympathy.

"And you, who have been a hero and a potentate, have come to serve this city as a simple mercenary?"

"Mopsus the archer has promised to give me a post of distinction among his troops."

"That is not enough, Actæon. You would have to live like the other soldiers, spending your life in the Forum taverns, and sleeping on the steps of the Temple of Hercules. No! here is your home! Sónnica will protect you!"

In her sparkling eyes, enlarged by the dark circle traced about them, shone an almost maternal love and sympathy.

The Athenian gazed at her with admiration as she sat erect in her chair like a white cloud in the dimly illuminated library, which, like all Grecian rooms, received no other light than that entering through the doorway.

"Let us go into the garden, Actæon. The afternoon is delicious, and we can imagine ourselves for a moment in the groves of the Academy."

They went out of the house and strolled along a winding avenue bordered by tall laurels, above which peeped the tops of banana trees, irrigated with wine to accelerate their growth. On the terrace two peacocks hailed them with strident calls, strutting along the balustrade and spreading their majestic tails.

Actæon, on beholding his beautiful protectress in the light of the sun, felt a thrill of desire rush through his body. She wore as her only covering a Grecian chiton, an open tunic, fastened with metal clasps over the shoulders, and secured around the waist by a golden girdle. The arms emerged bare from the white wrapping, and the left side of the tunic, closed from the armpit to the knee by small brooches, half opened at each step, revealing her pearly nudity. The material was so delicate that its transparency displayed the out-

lines of her rosy body, which seemed to float in a veil of woven foam.

"Does my dress astonish you, Actæon?"

"No; I admire you. You seem to me Aphrodite surging from the waves. It is a long time since I have seen the women of Athens disclosing their divine beauty. I am corrupted by my travels, through the rude customs of the barbarians."

"It may happen so. As Herodotus says, nearly all who are not Greeks consider it opprobrious to appear nude. —If you only knew how scandalized the people of this city were in the beginning at my Athenian customs!—as if there existed anything more beautiful in the world than the human form!—as if the nude were not the supreme beauty! I adore Phryne, astonishing with her nude body the old men of the Areopagus; making the thousands of pilgrims gathered on the Eleusinian strand shout with enthusiasm when they saw her white form surge from among the veils, like the moon from behind the clouds. I believe in the promise of her bosom more than in the power of the gods."

"Do you doubt the gods?" asked Actæon, with his fine Athenian smile.

"The same as do you and all those from *there*. The gods now serve only as themes for artists, and if they are tolerated in old Homer, it is because he was skilled in celebrating their quarrels in graceful verse. No; I do not believe in them; they are as simple and credulous as children, but I love them because they are sane and beautiful."

"In what do you believe, then, Sónnica?"

"I do not know—in something mysterious that surrounds us and animates life; I believe in beauty and love."

She was silent a moment, standing in a pensive attitude; then she continued:

"I hate the barbarians, not because they have no treasures of art, but for the odium they cast on love, which they enchain with all manner of laws and restrictions. They are hypocritical and deformed; they make reproduction a crime, and they hate the nude, hiding the body with all kinds of rags, as if it were an abominable spectacle—when carnal love, the meeting of two bodies, is the sublime love through which we are born, and without which the fount of existence would dry up—extinguishing the world."

"That is why we are great," said Actæon with gravity. "On this account our arts fill the earth, and all bow before the moral grandeur of Greece. We are the people that has known how to honor life making a cult of its origin; we satisfy the impulses of love without hypocrisy, and because of this we understand better than others the needs of the spirit. Intelligence wings more truly when it does not feel the weight of the body tormented by pudicity. We love and study; our gods go naked, with no other adornment than the ray of immortal light upon the forehead. They do not demand blood, like those barbarian divinities enwrapped in clothing which only leaves uncovered their frowning assassin faces; they are as beautiful as human beings, they laugh like them, and their peals of merriment wafted around Olympus gladden the earth."

"Love is the most virtuous sentiment; from it emanates all greatness. Only the barbarians calumniate it, hiding it as a dishonest thing."

"I know a people," said Actæon, "among whom love, the divine fusion of bodies, is looked upon as an impurity. Israel is an amalgamation of miserable tribes, occupying an arid region surrounding a temple of barbaric construction, copied from all peoples. They are hypocrites, rapacious and cruel; on this account they abominate love. If such a people were to attain universal influence like Greece, if it should dominate the world, imposing its beliefs, the eternal light which shines on the Parthenon would go out; humanity would grope in darkness, with the heart dry and the thought dead; the world would be a necropolis, all would be moving corpses, and centuries and more centuries would pass before man would again find the road, coming back to our smiling gods, to the cult of beauty that gladdens life."

Sónnica, listening to the Greek, approached the tall rose bushes and began to pluck the flowers, smelling them with delight. She imagined herself in Athens, in the garden on the Street of Tripods, listening to her poet who had initiated her into the sweet mysteries of art and love. And she gazed sweetly at Actæon, with frank and sincere passion, with the submission of a slave, saying "I love you" with her eyes, as if only awaiting a word to fall into his arms.

The breeze lightly stirred the whole garden. Bits of purple sky inflamed by the setting sun could be seen through the foliage. A mysterious penumbra began to form beneath the trees. The sounds from the fields,

the stirring of the people outside the villa in the houses of the slaves, and even the cries of the exotic birds on the terrace seemed to come from a distant world.

Between two clumps of rose bushes stood an image of Priapos carved from the trunk of a tree. The rustic god was smiling with a lewd expression, arching his hairy breast and thrusting his abdomen forward.

Sónnica smiled on seeing the Athenian looking at him.

"You know that it is an ancient custom to place the gardens under the protection of Priapos," said Sónnica. "They say that he frightens away thieves. My slaves believe it firmly, and I keep the god as a symbol of life in the midst of these roses, which are as beautiful as those of Pæstum. The allurements of Priapos complete the sweet charm of abounding Nature."

The two Greeks walked on in silence, with slow step, along an avenue of slender cypresses at the end of which opened a grotto, its rocky walls draped with ivy, allowing a greenish, diffused light to filter through its openings. A white cupid spilled from a shell a stream of water like tender falling tear-drops, caught in an alabaster basin. There the luxurious Sónnica spent the warmer part of the day.

Actæon was conscious of a soft, warm touch upon his shoulder.

"Sónnica!"

Caressing her around her gold-encircled waist, her white and satiny arms knotted themselves responsive about his neck like ivory serpents; her head fell upon the shoulder of the Greek, who, looking down, saw fixed upon him a pair of violet eyes moist with ecstatic emotion.

"You are Athens come back to me!" She murmured sweetly, with bated breath. "When I met you this morning on the steps of Aphrodite's temple I thought you must be Apollo descended to earth. I felt the Olympian fire, impossible to resist. Long have I scorned love, but at last the little god is avenged, and—and—I love you!"

Like a soft glow the beauty of the Greek shone in the twilight of the grotto.

Nine guests were bidden to Sónnica's banquet, and as night closed in they came, some in chariots, others mounted on gaily caparisoned horses, passing between rows of slaves holding lighted torches.

When Sónnica and Actæon entered the festal hall, the guests stood in groups near the purple couches arranged about the curving table, the marble top of which some slaves were washing with sponges and perfumed water. Four enormous bronze lampadaries occupied the corners of the triclinium. From their brackets were suspended numberless little jars of perfumed oil, in which floated wicks, shedding a rich light. Garlands of roses and foliage hung from lamp to lamp, constituting a fragrant border for the banquet hall. Near a door leading to the peristyle stood carved wooden tables piled with gold and silver dishes and the keen-edged carving knives for the use of the slaves.

Alorcus the Celtiberian stood talking with Lachares and three of those young Greeks who so scandalized the Saguntines in the Forum by their effeminate ways. The arrogant barbarian, according to the custom of his race, wore his sword belted to his waist until the banquet

began, when he hung it upon the ivory *anaclintron* of the couch that he might have it ever within reach of his hand.

At the other extreme of the table two citizens of advanced age, and Alcon the pacific Saguntine, with whom Actæon had spoken that morning on the esplanade of the Acropolis, were carrying on a quiet conversation.

The two old men were long-time friends of the house, Greek merchants whom Sónnica had taken as partners in business, and whom she invited to her nocturnal feasts, appreciating the dignified air which they added to these occasions.

As the devoted pair entered the banquet chamber the guests divined their felicity in Sónnica's tender, shining eyes, and in the abandon with which she inclined toward Actæon her blonde head, crowned with roses and violets.

"At last we have a master," murmured Lachares with a tone of jealousy.

"He has been more fortunate than we," replied the Celtiberian resignedly. "But he is an Athenian, and I can understand that Sónnica, the cold hearted, should have surrendered to one of her own people."

Actæon, being presented to the guests, moved about the hall with the self-possession of a potentate enjoying his riches, like a man accustomed to princely splendors—he whom a stroke of fortune had suddenly lifted out of poverty to his old-time condition.

At a signal from Sónnica the guests reclined upon the purple couches which surrounded the table, and four young girls entered the hall bearing on their heads, with the slender grace of canephoræ, little willow baskets filled with rose-crowns. They walked with airy

ease, as if gliding over the mosaic to the sound of invisible flutes, and with their delicate girlish hands they crowned the guests with flowers.

Suddenly the steward appeared with an irritated countenance.

"Mistress, Euphobias the parasite is trying to enter."

The guests burst into cries and protests on hearing this.

"Throw him out, Sónnica! He will make us miserable!" shouted the young men, recalling with anger his jeers in the Forum at their dress and manners.

"It is a shame for the city to tolerate that insolent beggar," said the grave citizens.

Sónnica smiled, then suddenly recalling a cruel epigram which the parasite had dedicated to her, and had recited in the Forum a few days before, she said frigidly to the steward:

"Drive him away with a club."

The guests bathed their hands at a lavabo of perfumed water which a slave passed from couch to couch, and Sónnica had given the order to commence the banquet when the steward returned with a rough-knobbed club clutched in his hand.

"I have beaten him, mistress, but he will not go. He suffers the blows, but after each one he works his way a little farther into the house."

"And what does he say?"

"He says that one of Sónnica's feasts is impossible without the presence of Euphobias, and that the blows are a sign of appreciation."

The woman displayed compassion; the guests laughed; and Sónnica gave the order to admit the philosopher,

but before the steward had left the room to comply with her command Euphobias had already entered the hall, cringing, humble, but looking at the assembled company with insolent eyes.

"The gods be with you! May joy ever attend you, beautiful Sónnica!"

Turning to the steward he said loftily:

"Brother, now that you see that I get in anyhow, try to wield a less heavy hand in future."

Accompanied by the laughter of the guests he rubbed his forehead on which a lump had begun to rise, and with a corner of his time-worn mantle he wiped off a few drops of blood close to one ear.

"Greeting, lousy one!" the gallant Lachares called to him.

"Away from us!" shouted the other youths.

But Euphobias paid no attention. He smiled at Actæon, seeing him reclining near Sónnica, and his eyes shone with a malicious expression.

"You have arrived where I thought you would. You will master these effeminate creatures who surround Sónnica and who heap insults upon me."

Paying no heed to the mocking retorts of the young gallants he added with a servile smile:

"I trust you will not forget your old friend Euphobias. Now you can set him up to all the wine he wishes in the taverns of the Forum."

The philosopher took the couch at the farther end of the table, and he refused the crown offered him by the slave.

"I have not come for flowers; I have come to eat. I can find plenty of roses merely by taking a stroll in

the country; but what I do not find in Saguntum is a crust of bread for a philosopher."

"Are you hungry?" asked Sónnica.

"I am more thirsty than hungry. I have spent the whole day talking in the Forum; they all listened to me, but it never occurred to any one to refresh my throat."

According to the Grecian custom an *arbiter bibendi* must be chosen, a guest of honor who should propose the toasts, announce the moment for drinking, and direct the conversation.

"Let us choose Euphobias," said Alorcus, with the grave humor of a Celtiberian.

"No!" protested Sónnica. "One night we put him in charge of the banquet for a joke, and we were all drunk before the third course. He proposed a potation at every mouthful."

"Why choose a king?" said the philosopher. "We already have one at Sónnica's side. Let it be the Athenian!"

"Yes, let it be he," said the elegant Lachares," and may he not allow you to speak during the whole night, insolent parasite!"

In the centre of the table stood a broad bronze crater, over the edges of which peeped a group of nymphs looking at themselves in the oval lake of wine. Each guest had a slave at his back to serve him, and they dipped wine from the crater to fill the glasses of the guests for the first libation. They were murrhine cups, brought from Asia at a great price, of mysterious fabrication, into which entered the dust of certain shells, and myrrh, hardened and tinted. They were white and opaque, like ivory, holding pieces of colored glass embedded,

and their mysterious composition gave a voluptuous fragrance to the wine.

Actæon raised himself in his couch to propose the first toast in honor of the chosen divinity.

"Drink to Diana, Athenian," spoke the grave voice of Alcon; "drink to the Saguntine goddess!"

But in the hand which remained free the Athenian felt another, delicate and beringed, clasping it with a warm caress, so he dedicated his libation to Aphrodite, and the young men greeted it with shouts of enthusiasm. Aphrodite was to be the goddess for that night! While the young men thought of the dancers from Gades, the great attraction of the banquet, Sónnica and Actæon, their elbows resting on the cushions, caressed each other with their eyes, while they leaned shoulder to shoulder, close to the edge of the table.

Strong slaves, perspiring from standing over the fires in the kitchens, set upon the table the food for the first course, served in great plates of red Saguntine terra cotta. There were shellfish raw and broiled, all highly spiced. Fresh oysters, mussels, enchinoderms dressed with parsley and mint, asparagus, peppers, lettuce, peacock eggs, tripe seasoned with cumin and vinegar, and fried birds swimming in a sauce of grated cheese, oil, vinegar, and silphium. There was also served *oxygarum* made in the fisheries of New Carthage—a paste of tunny milt, loaded with salt and vinegar,, which excited the palate, stimulating one to drink wine.

The aroma from these dishes floated through the festal hall.

"Talk not to me about the nest of the phœnix!" said Euphobias with his mouth full. "According to the poets,

the phœnix bestrews its nest with incense, bay, and cinnamon, but I swear by the gods that I would rather be in Sónnica's triclinium than in that nest!"

"Which does not prevent your dedicating insulting verses to me, you rascal," said the Greek woman, smiling.

"Because I am fond of you, and I protest against your follies. By day I am a philosopher; but at night my stomach compels me to come to you, so that your menials may beat me, and that you may give me something to eat."

The slaves removed the plates of the first course, and brought on the second which consisted of fish and meat. A small roasted wild boar occupied the centre of the table; great pheasants with their plumage laid as a covering upon their cooked flesh, were displayed on plates surrounded by hard-boiled eggs and fragrant herbs; thrushes spitted upon reeds were arranged in form of crowns; hares, on being carved, displayed a stuffing of rosemary and thyme; and wild doves were brought on with quails and thrushes. There were innumerable dishes of fish, reminding the Greeks of the viands of their native land, and between mouthfuls they discussed the glauci from Megara, the eels from Scione, and breams and xiphiae from the coasts of Phalerum and from the Hellespont.

Each guest chose his favorite food from among the different dishes, and regaled his friends with it, presents being carried by slaves from one end of the table to the other. More wines, in sealed and dusty amphoræ, were brought up from the cellars, and overflowed the festal goblets. Wine from Chios, rare and

costly, mingled with those from Cæcubum, from Falerno, and from Massico, in Italy, and those from Laurona and from the Saguntine domain. To the bouquet of these liquids was added the aroma of the sauces, into which entered, following the complicated recipes of the Grecian cuisine, silphium, parsley, sesame, fennel, cumin, and garlic.

Sónnica barely touched her food; she neglected the successive plates, heaped with presents from her guests, to smile at Actæon.

"I love you," she whispered. "I feel as if a Thessalian magus had cast a spell over me. My whole being responds to the throb of love. Do you see these fishes? I am afraid to eat them; I feel that I would be committing a sacrilege, because roses and fishes are dedicated to Venus, the mother of our joy. I only wish to drink—to drink profoundly. I feel within me a fire which caresses, yet consumes me."

The guests gormandized, rendering tribute to Sónnica's cook, an Asiatic, purchased in Athens by one of her navigators. He had cost her almost the price of a villa; but they considered the money well spent, and they admired the art with which his meditations in a corner of the kitchen produced these astonishing combinations, afterward executed by the other slaves —above all that happy invention of a mild sauce of dates and honey for the roasts. With such a slave it were possible to enjoy one's food throughout the whole of life and to ward off death for many years.

The second course had ended. The guests were lying surfeited on their couches, loosening their garments. The slaves served them with wine in horn-

shaped flagons of alabaster, which permitted a slender stream to gurgle from its spout, so that they need not lift themselves to drink. The purple drapery of the couches was stained with wine. The great lampadaries in the corners, with their tapers of perfumed oil, seemed to glow more faintly in the dense atmosphere charged with vapor from the steaming viands. The garlands of roses hanging in festoons from the lamps wilted in the heavy atmosphere. Through the open door the guests caught glimpses of the columns of the peristyle, and of a strip of dark blue sky in which twinkled many stars.

The pacific Alcon rising up in his couch, smiled with the amiability of mild intoxication, gazing at the splendor of the firmament.

"I drink to the beauty of our city!" he said, raising the horn filled with wine.

"To the Grecian Zacynthus!" shouted Lachares.

"Yes, let Saguntum be Greek!" answered his friends.

The conversation turned upon the great festival which, at Sónnica's initiative, the Greeks of Saguntum would celebrate in honor of Minerva on gathering the harvest. The Panathenaic festivals should end with a procession like that which took place in Athens, and which Phidias had immortalized in marble in his famous friezes. The young men spoke with enthusiasm of the horses they would ride, and of the contests for which they were training by persistent exercise. Sónnica patronized the festivals with her immense wealth, and she wished to make these as famous as that one which Athens celebrated on the dedication of the Parthenon.

The Saguntine youths would race outside the walls in the morning to demonstrate that they were as clever as the Celtiberian horsemen; the more pacific would contest in the Forum, lyre in hand, to win the crown offered to the one who should hymn the poems of Homer most creditably; afterward the procession would reveal all its magnificence through the streets of the city, climbing up to the Acropolis; and in the afternoon the race of the flaming torch would take place to divert the people, who would hiss at him who let his torch go out, and would whip up him who traveled slowly to protect the flame.

"But do you really believe in Minerva?" Euphobias asked of Sónnica.

"I believe in what I see," she replied. "I believe in spring, in the resurrection of the verdant fields, in the grain which springs from the ground to nourish man from its golden bearded heads; the flowers, which are the incense-bearers of the earth; and, above all the goddesses, I love Athene for the wisdom with which she endows man and makes him divine, and I love Minerva for her bounty which maintains them."

The slaves laid the third course on the table, and the guests, half-inebriated, raised themselves in their couches to look at the little baskets of fruit, the plates covered with pastry toasted over the fire in the Cappadocian style; buns made of sesame flour, filled with honey, and browned in the oven; and cakes of cheese stuffed with stewed fruits.

Small amphoræ containing the choicest wines, brought from the uttermost ends of the world by Sónnica's ships, were uncorked. Wine from Byblus in Phœnicia satu-

rated the atmosphere with a fragrance as penetrating as bottles of perfume; that from Lesbos which on being poured gave forth a ravishing odor of roses, and, in addition to these, cups were filled with cordials from Erythrea and Heraclea, strong and spiritous, and those from Rhodes and Chios, prudently mixed with sea-water to aid the digestion.

Some slaves, to excite again the appetite of the guests, and to make them drink, offered plates of locusts cured in brine; radishes with vinegar and mustard, toasted garbanzos, and olives, prized for their size and flavor, swimming in a piquant sauce.

Actæon could eat nothing, diverted by Sónnica, who, leaving her *epiclintron* pressed against him, rubbing her cheek upon the Athenian's with mingling breath. Thus they remained in silence, each watching the image reflected from the pupils of the other.

"Let me kiss you on the eyes," murmured Sónnica, "they are the windows of the soul, and I imagine that through them my caress will penetrate to the depths of your being."

The arrogant Alorcus, grave as all Celtiberians when intoxicated, spoke of the coming festival as he gazed into his empty cup. He had five horses in the city, the finest his tribe could furnish, and if the magistrates would allow him to take part in the rejoicings, despite his being a foreigner, the Saguntines would have a chance to admire the strength and swiftness of his beautiful coursers. The crown should fall to him, unless some unexpected event summoned him from the city.

Lachares and his elegant friends proposed to contest for the prize in singing, and their effeminate hands, slender and beringed, moved nervously over the table as if already thrumming the lyre, while their painted lips sang Homeric verses in subdued tones. Euphobias, lying on his back on his couch, gazed aloft with dreamy eyes, with no other earthly desire than to reach forth his glass and call for wine; but Alcon and the Greek merchants became impatient at the slowness of the banquet.

"The dancers! Let the daughters from Gades come!" they called with tremulous voices, the fiery spark of intoxication glowing in their eyes.

"Yes; let the dancing girls come!" cried Euphobias rousing from his stupor. "I want to see how this honorable people disturbs its digestion, which is the best gift to man, by the lewd steps of the daughters of Hercules."

Sónnica made a sign to her steward, and in a moment the joyous sound of flutes was heard in the peristyle.

"The auletai!" shouted the guests.

Four slender girls, violet-crowned, marched into the triclinium, wearing a chiton open from waist to ankle, displaying the left leg at every step, holding to their mouths the double aulos, their agile fingers playing over the holes of the instrument.

Standing in the space enclosed by the curve of the table, they began a sweet melopœia, which caused the guests to sit up in their couches and to smile placidly. Most of them recognized the flute players as old acquaintances, and swinging their heads in time with the music, they watched with avid eyes the outlines of their

bodies which swayed rhythmically from the movement of their dancing feet.

Several times the flutists changed the tune and measure, but at the end of an hour the guests became bored.

"We are used to all this," protested Lachares; "they are the same flutists who always play at your banquets, Sónnica. Since you have fallen in love you forget your friends. Give us something else! Let us see the dancers!"

"Yes, let the dancing girls come!" chorused the young men.

"Have patience," said the Greek woman, lifting her head for an instant from Actæon's breast; "the dancers will appear, but not until the end of the banquet when I am overcome with sleep. I know you well, and I can guess what the finish of the feast will be. First I wish you to see a little slave who has learned from the Grecian mariners tricks like those of celebrated Athenian performers."

Before the slave entered, the guests turned in alarm toward the farther end of the table. A beast-like growling arose from beneath it. Euphobias had fallen from his couch, and with his head on the mosaic was disgorging his dinner, accompanied by a stream of wine.

"Give him laurel leaves!" called the prudent Alcon. "There is nothing better to dissipate drunkenness."

The slaves compelled him almost by force to chew the leaves, paying no attention to the philosopher's protests.

"I am not drunk," shouted Euphobias. "It is the hunger which persecutes me. Most of the time I can find no bread, and when I am so fortunate as to sit at a table like Sónnica's, the food which I eat escapes me."

"Say rather the wine which you drink escapes you," replied Sónnica, resting her head again on Actæon's breast.

The contortionist had reappeared before the table, and had greeted her mistress by touching her hands to her face. She was a girl of about fourteen, with yellowish skin, wearing a pair of red trunks. Her nervous and agile limbs, and her lean, undeveloped chest, made her look like a boy. The elder guests smiled, stirred by her fresh and almost masculine beauty.

She uttered a shout, and doubling over with elastic vigor stood on her hands, and with feet in the air and her head almost touching the floor, she began to run swiftly about the triclinium. Then, with a powerful spring of her arms, she leaped upon the table, and trotted on her hands among the confusion of plates, amphoræ, and cups, without upsetting them.

The guests applauded with enthusiasm. The two Greek merchants offered her their goblets, pinching her cheeks while she drank, and passing their hands caressingly over her back.

"Lachares," said the philosopher to his aristocratic enemy, "why have you and your companions not brought your beautiful slave boys who serve you as supports in the Forum?"

"Sónnica will not allow it," replied the young gallant, pleased at the question, not suspecting the irony

in Euphobias' words. "She is a superior woman, but this is the only one of the refined customs of Athens which she declines to tolerate. She believes in Jupiter and Leda; but she spits upon the beautiful Ganymede. She is not a full-fledged Athenian."

A double row of broad, sharp swords was placed along the floor by a group of slaves, so that the contortionist might show her greatest feat. The flutists began to play a slow, solemn melody, and the contortionist, again standing head downward, began to walk between the swords without disturbing them or touching their sharp edges. The guests, cup in hand, followed her course anxiously through the forest of keen steel blades, which at her slightest wavering would penetrate her body. She paused near a sword, extended one arm, and sustaining herself on a single hand she bent the elbow until she kissed the floor; then she stiffened the muscles, raising herself back to her first position, and throughout this whole maneuvre the cutting edge grazed her breast without even abrading the skin.

When the girl finished her act the guests applauded vigorously. The two old men flung their tunics around her, while her malicious, boyish face peeped forth and sniffed the foods and sweetmeats.

"But, Sónnica," protested Lachares, "when did the beautiful Greek ever forget her friends like this? Athenian, you have maddened her with your love; now intercede for us, and ask that the daughters of Gades present themselves quickly!"

Sónnica appeared to be sleeping upon Actæon's breast, spellbound by his close, warm, throbbing heart.

"Bid them enter——let my guests do what they wish——only leave us in peace!"

Footsteps, giggling, and whispering were heard in the peristyle, and the Gaditanian dancers entered the triclinium, crowding each other like a stampeding flock.

They were girls of small stature, with supple, agile limbs; their skin a pale amber, their eyes large and luminous; their hair black; their bodies floating in vapory veils, alluring and deceptive in their semi-transparency. They wore on their breasts and on their arms and ankles strands of coins and amulets which rung with merry tinkle at the slightest movement, and they stared boldly at the guests like a flock accustomed to such feasts, who traveled from banquet to banquet, seeing men only in their hours of intoxication.

The ruler of the band, a wrinkled, parchment-faced old man with an insolent stare, was dressed like them in feminine veils, his cheeks painted, his eyes encircled with black, having great hoops in his ears, and a cynical leer on his vermilion lips, ready for trade in the most infamous traffic.

Euphobias, indifferent to the charms of the dancing girls, looked at him with amazement, wondering to what sex belonged those skeleton arms peeping from beneath the veils, painted white, and weighted down with jewels.

"Brother, are you a man or a woman?" the philosopher gravely enquired.

"I am the father of all these flowers," replied the eunuch with a squeaking voice, showing as he smiled his repulsive, toothless gums.

Three of the women, squatting on the floor, began to fillip their castanets with lively clacking, while another beat with her hands on a globe-bottomed timbrel tucked under her left arm.

The eunuch rapped on the floor with his staff, and instantly four pairs of dancers whisked into the centre of the triclinium, and began to swing to the sound of clamorous barbaric music played by their companions. They danced with stately step, holding themselves majestically erect, spreading their arms as if swimming in space, their brown bodies wheeling in slow spirals, seeming to float on the waves of transparent foam which enwrapped them. Gradually their movements accelerated; they gracefully extended their bodies, elevating their firm chests, outlining their contours among the veils—contortions in which the trunk revolved on the hips, a whirl of forms enclosed in white and floating drapery, which as it flew into a thousand folds with voluptuous undulations, fanned up the flames of the lamps.

Suddenly, at a signal from the old crone, the music stopped, and the dancing ceased.

"More! More!" shouted the guests, sitting up in their couches with excitement.

It was merely a halt to change the time and to evoke applause by taking a brief rest. The music assumed a gay and noisy rhythm; the old eunuch marked time on the floor with the beating staff; he uttered a prolonged lament, sad, yet with a mild sweetness, which did not seem to come from his infected mouth; and then followed slow dreamy strophes of love with words of double meanings, which acted like aphrodisiacs, and were greeted with a roar of enthusiasm.

The dancers sprang into the centre of the triclinium, whirling swiftly, as if possessed of a fever. Each song served as a lash further to excite their nerves, and their

bare feet tripped over the mosaic like snow-white birds, or rose in gentle flight, trailing clouds of gauze, displaying well modeled limbs with tinkling ornaments which scattered silvery tones. Their gently curving abdomens seemed to assume a separate existence, moving like restless animals over their bodies which they held in sacerdotal rigidity, contracting in circular waves, forming a whirlpool of voluptuous undulations, of which the umbilicus was the rosy centre. They accompanied the dance with incessant snapping of fingers. Gathering the gauzy draperies beneath their arms and adjusting them around their hips, they moved their amphoral curves with seductive rhythm, sighing langourously, with bowed heads, as if enchanted by the contemplation of their own beauty. Suddenly the music grew fainter, as if drawing away, and the dancers, their feet together and limbs half opened, descended in a slow spiral, with gentle undulations, until they touched the floor; the instant their callipygian charms grazed the mosaic, they recoiled like suddenly awakened serpents, and the castanets clacked and the timbrel beat louder, accompanied by the howls of the musicians who animated them with lascivious words and exclamations of supreme abandon.

The guests, red with emotion, their eyes sparkling and their mouths dry, had rushed into the centre of the triclinium, interrupting the dance, mixing with the couples and grasping them. Euphobias lay snoring at the foot of his couch. Sónnica had disappeared long before, leaving the triclinium, supported by a slave without lifting her head from Actæon's shoulder.

The veils of the dancing girls fell to the foot of the table; they devoured the sweetmeats and fruits, they drank from the amphoræ, plunged their heads into the crater of the nymphs, and laughed on seeing their faces bespattered with wine. The eunuch continued singing and pounding furiously on the floor to mark the rhythm for his musicians. In vain! The girls who tried to dance could not escape from the hands of the guests, who at every turn slapped them on their buttocks and tore off their veils. The young men rolled at the foot of the lamps, maddened by these bacchantes wise in perversion, reared in a port to which navigators brought both the refinements and the corruptions of the entire world. Alorcus the Celtiberian, brutalized by his enthusiasm, walked around the triclinium making a display of his strength by sustaining in his sinewy hands two dancing girls, who screamed with fright, while outside could be noted in the darkness of the peristyle the movement of the slaves, men and women, from the kitchens, creeping near to enjoy from without the spectacle of the bacchanal.

It was not yet dawn when Actæon awoke, wondering, no doubt, at the soft couch and at the perfumes of the dormitory. Sónnica was lying beside him, and by the light of a lamp hanging near the door he could see a smile of felicity flitting over her lips.

After the intoxication of the night the Athenian felt a vehement desire to breathe the fresh, open air. He was stifling where he was, in Sónnica's room, sunk down in the couch that seemed to burn with the fire of their recent passion, near the form which now lay inert

and with no other sign of life than the gentle sighs which inflated her bosom.

The Greek softly tiptoed out to the peristyle. The lamps were still burning in the triclinium, and an insufferable vapor of viands, wines, and sweaty bodies floated through the doorway. He saw the guests lying on the floor among the snoring women. Euphobias had awakened from his drunken sleep, and, occupying the place of honor, Sónnica's couch, was forging for himself the illusion of being master of the villa. Wrapped in his tattered mantle he was compelling two sleepy dancing girls to dance, contemplating their nude flesh with a disdainful stare like a man who considers himself above carnal desires.

As Actæon appeared in the triclinium some slaves fled, fearing lest they should be punished for their curiosity. Not wishing to be seen by the philosopher the Greek went out of the house seeking the cool garden. There he noticed the same flight before his steps. Embracing couples fled along the avenues; from behind the clumps of foliage arose exclamations of surprise as he approached, and in the dissipating shadows of the night the garden seemed animated by a mysterious life beneath its leafy bowers.

They were slaves who, excited by the feast, continued beneath the open sky the scenes of the triclinium.

The Greek smiled, reflecting that the feast was destined to augment his mistress' wealth.

"Let them enjoy themselves in peace. To disturb them would damage Sónnica's interests."

He passed out of the garden so as not to interfere with the joy of the miserable flock which, forgetting

every trouble, sought each other there in the dim light of dawn.

He crossed Sónnica's immense dominions, through groves of fig trees and extensive olive orchards, until suddenly he found himself in the highway of the Serpent. It was deserted. In the distance he heard the galloping of a horse and saw in the bluish light of dawn a rider who was undoubtedly making for the port.

As he drew near Actæon recognized him in spite of his head being covered by the hood of a war mantle. It was the Celtiberian shepherd. The Greek dashed into the centre of the roadway and grasped the horse by the bridle, while the rider, checked in his race, leaned back, tugging at the knife which he wore in his belt.

"Be calm!" said Actæon in a low voice. "If I stop you it is to say that I have recognized you. You are Hannibal, the son of the great Hamilcar! Your disguise may serve you among the Saguntines, but your boyhood friend knows you."

The African bent his head forward with its bushy mass of hair, and his imperious eyes made out the Greek in the dim light.

"Is it you, Actæon? When I met you so many times yesterday I knew that you would finally recognize me. What are you doing here?"

"I am living in the house of Sónnica the rich."

"I have heard of her, a Greek as famous for her beauty and her talent as the courtesans of Athens. I was also desirous of knowing her, and I think I should have loved her if it were a man's mission to chase after women. And are you doing nothing else?"

"I am a soldier in the pay of the city."

"You, the son of Lysias, the confidential captain of Hamilcar! You, a man educated in the Prytaneum of Athens, in the service of a city of barbarians and merchants!"

Hannibal was silent for a moment as if wondering at the conduct of the Greek. At last he added resolutely:

"Mount behind me on my horse! Come with me! In the port a Carthaginian ship, loading with silver, is waiting for me. I go to New Carthage to place myself at the head of my troops. Days of glory are coming, an immense and sublime enterprise, like that of the giants when, heaping mountain on mountain, they scaled your Olympus. Come! You are the friend of my childhood; I knew you before Hasdrubal and Mago, those sons of Hamilcar, whom the glorious captain gave me for brothers, calling all three of us 'my lion's brood.' I know you. You are astute and brave like your father; at my side you will conquer riches. Who knows but that you may reign as king in some fair land when, imitating Alexander, I divide my conquests among my captains!"

"No, Carthaginian," said Actæon gravely. "I do not hate you; I remember our early years with pleasure; but I will never go with you. Your lineage prevents it, the past record of your nation, and the bloody shade of my father."

"Nationality is but a fiction; 'the people' a pretext for making war. What matters it to you whether you serve Carthage or any other republic, since you are a Greek? If my own people should abandon me I would fight for any country. We are men of war; we fight

for glory, power, and riches; the needs of our people only serve to justify our victory and our despoiling of the enemy. I hate the merchants of Carthage, pacific and stuck to their shops, as much as I hate the proud Romans. Come, Actæon, since we have met, follow me! Fortune goes with me."

"No, Hannibal; here shall I remain. Seeing your African soldiers I should remember the mob that crucified Lysias."

"That was an unavoidable crime, a mad deed of that truceless war to which the mercenaries impelled us. My father lamented it a thousand times, remembering his faithful Lysias. With my protection I will make amends for that injustice of Carthage."

"I will not follow you, Hannibal. I have bid farewell to war and booty. I prefer to grow old here in this sweet and tranquil life, at the side of my Sónnica, loving peace like any one of those Saguntines who dwells in the merchants' ward."

"Peace? Peace?"

A strident and brutal shout of laughter, like that which Actæon had heard on the steps of Aphrodite's temple when the Roman legates were embarking, broke the silence of the roadway.

"Listen well, Actæon," said the African, recovering his gravity, "the proof that I still remember my boyhood affection for you lies in the frankness with which I speak my mind. Only to you, understand it well! If, sleeping in my tent, I should learn on awaking that what is in my mind had escaped in words, I would stab the sentinel who guarded my sleep. You speak of peace! Actæon, awake! If you think of growing old in tran-

quility in any part of the world, flee with that Greek woman whom you love, far, far away! Where I am, there shall be no peace until I have become the sovereign of the world! War marches ahead of my footsteps; he who will not submit to me must die or become my slave!"

The Greek comprehended the significance of the threat.

"Remember, Hannibal, that this city is Rome. The Republic has taken it for an ally and protects it."

"Do you imagine that I fear Rome? If I hate Saguntum it is because she is proud of her alliance, and that she scorns and forgets me, in spite of my being near. She fancies herself secure because that far-away Republic protects her, and she laughs at me, though I reign over all the Peninsula as far as the Ebro, and am encamped almost at her very gates. She antagonizes the Turdetani, who are my allies, as are all the Iberian tribes, and within her walls she beheads the citizens who love me, those who were friends of the great Hamilcar. Ah, blind and vainglorious city! How dear shall it cost thee to live near to Hannibal without knowing him!"

Turning about in his saddle he glared with menacing eyes at the Acropolis of Saguntum, which stood forth above the fog of the early morn.

"You could scarcely lay siege to her ally before Rome would fall upon you!"

"Let her come!" replied the African arrogantly. "That is what I want, I hate peace! I will not submit to seeing Carthage subdued while there exist men like me and my friends. Either Rome or Africa! Let the final clash come! The sooner the better, the supreme

struggle; and let that nation which is left standing be ruler of the world! I hate the rich of my country who live content in the shame of defeat because it enables them to traffic calmly and to cram their vaults with silver. Those are the wretches who, after our defeat in Sicily, dared to dream of abandoning Carthage and of moving wholesale to the islands of the Great Sea to live in tranquility. They are Carthaginians indeed; true sons of Phœnicia, with no other conception of glory than trade, nor other aspiration than to find new ports where they can market their wares! We Barcas are Libyans; we descend from the gods; like them we have greatness of thought; we must be masters, or die! Those merchants do not understand that it is not enough to be rich; that one must dominate and instill fear; and they formed in Carthage a peace-party, which embittered my father's life by defeats, and they leave me with no other resources than those that I can procure on the Peninsula. They do not know the Barcas, despite the fact that we struggle to make Carthage a world power! My father, when he lost Sicily, foresaw the future extinction of our nation, and he wished to prevent it. We had lost a great part of our ancient commerce. We needed an army to defend us from ambitious Rome, and we did not have it. The citizens of Carthage are good, at the best, to fight on their own soil. The merchant cannot bear the weight of arms nor endure marches for months and years through hostile countries. The profit derived from booty conquered with blood, he can win more easily standing behind his bales of goods, and as he loves money he does not wish to pay it out to foreign soldiers. That is why Hamilcar brought us to

the Peninsula, and here we have given Carthage new ports and markets, and the Barcas have an army gathered together by their own efforts. Little does it matter that the Carthaginian Senate, lovers of peace, refuse to send us soldiers. The Iberian tribes loved my father after putting his bravery to the test, and they will rise in arms at the voice of the Barcas against whatever enemy we may designate."

Hannibal turned his gaze toward the distant mountains, as if he could behold the innumerable barbarian tribes who lived behind them scratching the earth, or pasturing their flocks. "Hamilcar fell," he said sadly, "just as he was beginning to see his dreams realized in a great army with which to enter anew into strife with Rome, with riches of his own to carry on the war without need of assistance from the African merchants. Hasdrubal, the handsome husband of my sister, frittered away eight years on succeeding to his authority. He was a good governor, but a timid commander. Perhaps it was Baal, our savage god, who guided the arm of his assassin that he might be succeeded by another capable of exterminating the eternal enemy of Carthage. That one shall be I! Listen well, Greek! You are the only one who shares my thought. The moment for fighting the final battle has come. Soon shall Rome know that there exists a Hannibal who defies her by taking possession of Saguntum."

"You have scant power for that, African. Saguntum is strong, and I, who come from New Carthage, have seen there nothing but the elephants, the fragments of the army which your father brought, and the Numidian cavalry which your friends have sent from Africa."

"You forget the Iberians and the Celtiberians, the whole Peninsula, which will rise bodily and flock to the taking of Saguntum. The country is poor, and the city is overstocked with riches. I have noted it well. There is enough in it to pay an army for entire years, and even the Lusitanian tribes from the coast of the Great Sea will come attracted by the hope of loot and urged on by the hatred of rude natives for a city, opulent and civilized, where dwell their exploiters. It will be no great task for Hannibal to take possession of a republic of farmers and merchants."

"And after you become master, what then?"

The African answered nothing, but shrugged his shoulders with an enigmatic smile.

"You are silent, Hannibal. But after you are master of Saguntum you will have gained nothing. Rome will hurl her thunder at you for violating her treaties, and the Carthaginian Senate will curse you; it will set a price upon your head; it will order your soldiers to disobey you; and you will die crucified, or you will wander about the world like a fugitive slave."

"No! Fire of Baal!" shouted the chief arrogantly. "Carthage will attempt nothing against me; she will accept war with Rome, even though to-day she may not wish it. I have there innumerable partisans of the Barcas; the populace which loves war, because it yields cargoes of loot for distribution; the people of the outlying districts, whose enthusiasm I keep at white heat by sending them riches sacked on the Peninsula, after having paid my troops. Hamilcar and Hasdrubal did the same. They would be ready to cut off the heads of the rich if anything were attempted against Hanni-

bal. Since following my father for nine years, I have not returned to Carthage, but the people adore my name. Even those of the peace-party will follow me to war, if to war I drag them."

"And how will you conquer Rome?"

"I know not," said Hannibal with his mysterious smile. "I harbor a world of thoughts which would provoke the laughter of my friends if I should relate them. I see myself like a Titan scaling immense mountains, following the course of the eagle, ploughing through the snow, climbing to the very sky to fall upon my enemy with greater force. Ask me no more; I know nothing further. My will says, 'I desire,' and that is enough—I shall carry it through!"

Hannibal was silent, wrinkling his brows as if fearing he had said too much.

It was now daylight. Women with baskets on their heads were passing along the road. Two slaves carrying a great amphora hanging from a pole swung between their shoulders, stopped near them a moment to rest. The African patted his horse's neck as if preparing to leave.

"For the last time, Greek, will you come?"

Actæon shook his head.

"I know you too well to beg you to forget that you have seen Hannibal. You are astute. You know that what we have spoken here must be swallowed in the silence of the fields, and must be repeated to no one. Be happy in your new love, and live in peace, since, though born to soar as an eagle, you choose to stay here in a barnyard. If ever you oppose me as an enemy and contend against me, I will not crucify you; you shall

not become my slave. I love you, although you will not follow me. I do not forget that you were the first who taught me to hurl a dart. May Baal guard you, Actæon! My men await me at the port."

His mantle floating in the breeze, he started on a gallop, raising a cloud of dust, scattering the country people and slaves, who scurried to the sides of the road to give him passage.

CHAPTER IV

GREEK AND CELTIBERIAN.

Actæon told no one of his meeting. Moreover, after a few days he had almost forgotten it. Seeing the city tranquil, busy in preparation for the great Panathenaic festival, trusting in its protecting alliance with Rome, the recollection of the interview with the African assumed the vagueness of a dream.

Perhaps Hannibal's words were only the arrogant boasts of youth. Hated by the rich of his country, and with no better followers than those he himself could procure, he was surely not going to attempt the audacious enterprise of attacking a city allied to Rome, thus violating the treaties with Carthage.

Besides, the Greek was living in a period of sweet intoxications; ever in Sónnica's arms in the shade of the peristyle; listening to the lyres of the slaves and the flutes of the flute players, and watching the dancers from Gades, while his beloved crowned him with flowers, or sprinkled costly perfumes upon him.

Sometimes the restless spirit of the wanderer and man of war, trained to action and strife, manifested itself in the midst of this effeminacy. Then he would flee to the city. There he conversed with Mopsus, the archer, and listened to the grumblers in the Forum, who, not suspecting that Hannibal had passed through

Saguntum, jested at the possibility of the African chief attempting anything against them, and gloated in their power, trusting in the strength of their walls, and still more in the protection of Rome, which would repeat on the coasts of Iberia their triumphs over the Carthaginians in Sicily.

Actæon contracted a great friendship with Alorcus the Celtiberian. He admired the fiery pride of the barbarian, his nobility of sentiment, and the almost religious respect he displayed for the cultured Grecian woman. His father, now old and sick, was a petty king reigning over some tribes which pastured great flocks of horses and cattle in the mountains of Celtiberia. He was the sole heir, and some day would be obliged to rule that rude people with their ferocious customs, who, in perpetual brigandage, made war for the sake of stealing horses, and in years of famine came down from the mountains to despoil the farmers on the plains. His father had brought him to Saguntum when a child, and the Grecian customs produced such an effect in him that, when he had grown to manhood it became his most earnest desire to return to the city on the coast, and there he lived with a few servants of his tribe and his magnificent horses, deaf to the affectionate calls of the old chieftain drawing near to death, and being esteemed by the Saguntines as almost a fellow citizen.

He was eager to figure in the festival of the Panathenæa, that the Greeks of the city should admire him galloping in the races to conquer the crown of olives. He was grateful to Actæon for using his influence with Sónnica to secure the consent of the magistrates that the Celtiberian might enter among the horsemen

in the great procession that would climb to the Acropolis carrying the first sheaves of wheat to the temple of Minerva.

In those days when the Athenian languished amidst songs and perfumes, overwhelmed by the caresses of the Greek woman, who seemed to blaze with the fire of the last passion of her life, he sprang from his couch at dawn, slung his bow across his back, and followed by two handsome dogs tramped through the Saguntine domain, giving chase to the wildcats which came down from the surrounding mountains.

On one of these excursions he had an adventure. It was noon; the sun's warm light fell upon the land, and the panting dogs halted, barking at a grove of ancient fig trees with branches sweeping the ground, forming shady canopies of dense foliage. Actæon, quieting the animals, approached cautiously with bow ready to draw, and as he parted the curtain of leaves he saw in the centre of an open space enclosed by the trees his two friends Rhanto and Erotion.

The boy was seated on the ground before a pile of red clay which he was carefully modeling, wrinkling his brow, and whistling intently. The shepherdess, completely nude, with the assurance of healthy and innocent beauty, happy in being admired, was smiling at Erotion, her cheeks flushing lightly every time the artist raised his eyes from the clay to the model.

Actæon drank in with his eyes the form of her vernal body. He felt the enthusiasm of the Greeks in the presence of beauty, intensified by the ardor of manhood. He admired her bosom, tender and small as buds, barely perceptible; her lightly curving hips; the line

from her throat to her feet soft and undulating, which served to give more elegance to her chaste appearance; the grace of strong and beautiful girlhood, in addition to the attraction of sex. With the taste of a Greek of refinement he rejoiced in the freshness of her form, comparing it mentally with Sónnica's opulent but somewhat over-ripe charms.

Rhanto, as she saw the Greek's head appear between the leaves, uttered a piercing scream and scurried behind a fig tree in search of her clothes. Bells tinkled among the foliage and the goats thrust forward their glossy muzzles, their moist eyes, and curving horns.

"Is it you, Athenian?" said Erotion, arising with a gesture of ill humor. "You have frightened Rhanto by your unexpected presence."

Then he added maliciously, "Rhanto is your slave. I am well aware of that. And I also know that you are the master of the pottery where I work. You have risen much since that morning when we met you on the highway of the Serpent. You have dominion over Sónnica the rich. Love has made her your slave."

"I am not master of anyone," said the Greek simply. "I am your friend, and I do not forget that the first bread I ate in this city I received from your hands."

Erotion seemed to gain confidence at these words.

"What are you looking at, Athenian? That clay? How you must laugh at me! I am convinced that I am worthless as an artist. Yet there are moments when I feel myself capable of a great work; I conceive it; I see it in my mind as clearly as if I had it erected before me; but when I put my hands to the clay I realize

my lack of skill, and I am ready to weep. Ah! if only I could have gone to Greece!"

His words sounded like a lament; he stared angrily at the pile of clay which had crudely begun to assume the outlines of Rhanto's form.

"If you only knew how I had to urge her before she would consent to show the divine nudity of her body. Do not think it strange. She comes of a race of barbarians. She fears the club of her grandfather, the chief shepherd, that would fall upon her body if he should discover her as you did a few minutes ago. I explained to her about our sculptors, before whom the most famous hetæræ contended for the honor of disrobing; and the certainty that her mistress, Sónnica, had done the same in Athens was the only thing that decided her. But how can one copy her divine body? How imbue molded clay with the life which throbs beneath her skin?"

In his despair he threatened the clay figurine as if he would crush it under his feet. Then he took courage, and said resolutely:

"But I will be stronger than my untrained hands. I will work years and years if necessary, until I see the divine form of my Rhanto reproduced in all its beauty. I will not return to the pottery, although the old archer may kill me with blows. I began my statuette hoping that it might figure in the Panathenaic procession. Rhanto would carry it on her head, and the multitude would crowd around to see it. I only hope for a moment of inspiration, a fortunate moment. Who knows if to-morrow the muses may not breathe upon me,

and that I shall arise with the skill in my hands to execute my dream?"

Frankly hurling himself down from the pinnacle of his imagination he told the Athenian his ambition.

"If I manage to finish this statue the future will be all my own, and some day my name will be engraved in the Forum, and the people of the city will read it with admiration. I will free myself from the pottery forever. I will present my statue to Sónnica, after it has been admired by all Saguntum in the Panathenæa, and your lover, who is so generous, will give me passage in one of her ships. I shall see Athens. I will admire what you have seen, and then—then! Look, Actæon, through these leaves. What do you see on the hill of the Acropolis? Nothing. Walls of great stones, columns, roofs of temples, but not a single statue to proclaim from afar the glory of the city. They say that upon the Acropolis of Athens rises the gigantic figure of Pallas, all of bronze and gold, with a lance that seems to burn in the sunlight, and that it guides the mariners like a flame from many stadia out at sea. Is that true? Many, many nights have I dreamt of something like that, and I see Erotion returned from Athens a great artist, and raising a colossal work upon our Acropolis. The bulls of Geryon, enormous, gigantic, with gilded horns shining like flames, and behind them Hercules, covered with the skin of the Nemean lion, like Theron, his priest, in the great festivals of Saguntum, and his club, menacing on the height, shall be a signal to all the navigators of the Sucronian gulf. Ah! If only some day I realize this achievement!"

Rhanto had come out of her hiding-place covered

by a tunic, and she timidly approached Actæon, looking at him respectfully, and blushing at the same time at the recollection of the condition in which he had surprised her. Erotion, excited by the telling of his hopes, showed eagerness to resume his task. He glanced at his work, and seemed to disrobe the shepherdess with his eyes.

The Athenian understood that his presence disturbed the young people.

"Work, Erotion!" he said. "Be a great artist if you can. The sculptors of Athens would envy you your model. Now that I know that you hide here I will not again annoy you with my presence."

And so it was. He left the grove of fig trees permitting the two to work undisturbed in their mysterious retreat, Erotion spurred on by ambition, Rhanto submissive from love.

The day of the Panathenæa came at last.

The fame of the solemn festival had spread beyond the confines of Saguntum, and the rude Celtiberians assembled by caravans to witness the diversions of the rustic people.

The workers from the domain abandoned the labor of the harvest, and, dressed in their best, began streaming into the city at sunrise to attend the festival of the goddess of the fields. They carried great sheaves of wheat, interspersed with flowers, to offer to the goddess, and white fleeced lambs adorned with ribbons to sacrifice on her altar.

By sunrise the city was filled with a multicolored crowd which gathered in the Forum, or hurried along the river banks to see the horse races.

A great stadium had been formed near the Bætis-Perkes in which the principal citizens of Saguntum were to contest for the triumph. The senators, on long benches, and guarded by a group of mercenaries, presided over the festival. At one end of the race-track the sons of the merchants and rich agriculturists, the entire youth of Saguntum, almost nude, awaited the signal, leaning on their light lances, and holding the bridles of their barebacked horses which snorted and champed the bit, scenting the coming contest.

The signal to start was given, and placing their left feet on the handles of their lances all sprang simultaneously upon their chargers, dashing forward in a compact squadron along the track. The immense crowd broke into acclamations at sight of the bizarre riders who leaning forward almost lay on their horses' necks, as if forming a single body with them, waving their lances, quickening their gallop with shouts, and wrapped in a cloud of dust through which the multitude could barely make out the straining legs and the bellies of the animals which were nearly touching the ground. The wild race lasted long. The less skillful riders, and those with poorer mounts, were being outstripped; the squadron was diminishing visibly. He who should remain longest on the track, ever in advance of the others, would win the crown, and the people made bets on the Celtiberian Alorcus, and on the Athenian Actæon who figured from the first instant at the head of the riders.

The citizens who did not wish to wait in the sun for the end of the race followed the river bank until they reached the walls, in the shade of which the youths were

wrestling or engaging in boxing matches in competition for the prize for dexterity. Others of more pacific turn went to the Forum, where beneath the porticos the young aristocrats were competing for the laurel crown offered for the most skilled in music and song. Seated on ivory chairs, attended by their handsome slave boys who fanned them with branches of myrtle, Lachares and his friends played the flute or thrummed the lyre, singing Greek verses with sweet and effeminate intonations. In the gathering, some laughed, mimicking the softness of their voices, but others, indignant, compelled silence, overcome by the charm which art, even in this womanish guise, exercised over their uncultured minds.

Late in the morning the clamor from the enthusiastic multitude filled the broad space of the Forum like reverberating thunder. It was the people returning from the races, acclaiming the victor. The arrogant Alorcus, dragged off the back of his horse, was borne on the shoulders of the most enthusiastic. The olive crown encircled his tossed and dusty hair. Actæon was beside him, celebrating his triumph fraternally, without a touch of envy.

The singers, swept away before this wave of enthusiasm, made off with their chairs and instruments. The crown of laurel was bound upon Lachares in the midst of general indifference, and he received no other congratulations than those of his slaves. All the enthusiasm of the city was lavished upon the winner in the races; the people were inflamed with admiration for strength and skill.

The solemn moment had come; the *pompa* was about to begin. In the merchant's ward slaves hung red and green bunting from roof to roof which shaded the streets. The windows and terraces were draped with multicolored tapestries of complicated design, and slave women placed censers in the doorways for burning perfumes.

The rich Grecian women, followed by their servants who carried sedan chairs, went in search of places where they could sit on the steps of the temples or in the shops at the Forum, and the people ranged themselves along the houses, impatiently awaiting the arrival of the procession which was forming outside the walls. Flocks of children completely nude ran through the streets waving branches of myrtle, shouting acclamations in honor of the goddess.

Suddenly the people stirred, bursting into cries of enthusiasm. The pageant in honor of Minerva had entered through the gate of the Road of the Serpent and was advancing slowly toward the Forum, through the ward of the merchants, who were the organizers of the festival.

In advance marched venerable old men with long beards, dressed in white, with voluminous mantles, their snowy hair crowned with green leaves, and carrying olive branches in their hands. Then came the more arrogant citizens, armed with lance and shield, the visor of the Grecian helmet drawn down over their eyes, proudly displaying the strong muscles of their arms and limbs. Next followed the most beautiful youths of the city, crowned with flowers, singing hymns in praise of the goddess; choruses of nude children, danc-

ing with unaffected grace, clasping hands, forming a chain of complicated combinations. Now appeared the maidens, daughters of the rich, clad only in a tunic of finest linen, which displayed their youthful charms. They carried in their hands as offerings dainty willow baskets covered by veils which hid the instruments for the sacrifice to the goddess, and with these the loaves made of new wheat and the handfuls of golden ears which were to be deposited on her altar. To clearly mark the dignity of the rich virgins, slave women marched behind them bearing their sedan chairs inlaid with ivory, and the striped silk sunshades with gay colored tassels at the ends of the staves.

A group of slave women chosen for their beauty, with Rhanto in the premier rank, carried on their heads great amphoræ filled with honey and water for the libations in honor of the goddess. Behind them marched the musicians and singers of the city, crowned with roses, clad in flowing white vestments. They swept the lyre, and played the flutes, and some Greeks from Sónnica's pottery, who had been wandering rhapsodists, sang fragments from the epic of the Trojan war before the barbarian throngs, who scarcely understood them, but admired the harmonious cadence of Homer's verses.

The people pressed forward, craning their necks to get a better view of the salii, the dancing devotees of Mars, who advanced nude, armed with sword and shield. Slung from the stick laid across their shoulders, two slaves were carrying a row of bronze shields, on which another slave was beating with a mallet, and keeping time to these harsh sounds the salii danced, making feigned attacks, and raining blows with their

swords on the shield of the pretended adversary, uttering ferocious shouts, and also performing pantomimes to recall the main episodes in the life of the goddess Minerva.

Behind the clamor, which set the streets in a commotion, causing the populace to roar with enthusiasm excited by the warlike display, came a group of girls holding a peplus of finest texture on which the principal Grecian women of the city had embroidered the combat of Minerva with the Titans. It was the offering which was to remain in the new temple of the goddess as a perpetual token of the festival.

Closing the procession, the sacred squadron advanced, the richest citizens, mounted on fiery horses, which, with their evolutions compelled the crowd to fall back against the walls. They presented a brave display, making their steeds rear on their hind feet, guided only by the bridle, riding bareback, pressing their knees into the horses' ribs. The eldest of the horsemen wore huge hats in the Athenian fashion. The young men wore the winged helmet of Mercury or went bareheaded, their short curls bound by a fire-colored ribbon. Alorcus wore the crown he had won, and Actæon, riding beside him on one of the Celtiberian's horses, smiled at the crowd, which regarded him with a certain respect as if he were Sónnica's husband and in possession of her enormous riches. The horsemen gazed with pride at the swords which hung at their sides and clanked against the flanks of their horses, and they took in with a glance the high Acropolis and the city lying at its feet, as if expressing confidence in their strength, and faith in the tranquility in which Saguntum might dwell, sure of protection.

The crowd fired with enthusiasm by the brilliant procession, acclaimed Sónnica. Surrounded by her slave women, she gazed down from the terrace of her great building in the ward of the merchants where she stored her merchandise. She was the organizer, the one who bore the cost of the peplus of Minerva, she it was who had transplanted to Saguntum the beautiful festival of Athens. Fragrant odors from the censers were flung upon the air; a shower of roses fell from the windows upon the maidens; arms glistened in the sunlight, and in moments when the people were silent the sounds of lyres and flutes floated on the breeze, accompanying with soft melodies the voices of the Homeric rhapsodists.

The crude Celtiberians, gathered to witness the festival, remained silent in astonishment at the procession which dazzled them with its glitter of arms and jewels and the multicolored confusion of costumes. The natives of Saguntum congratulated their fellow-citizens, the Greeks, admiring the splendor of the festival.

The festivity did not cease with the passing of the brilliant procession. In the afternoon the diversion of the populace, the festival of the poor, would take place. The race of the flaming torch would be held along the walls. Mariners, potters, laborers, all the free and poor people of the port and the country in wild career, would carry lighted torches in memory of Prometheus. He who accomplished the feat of making the round of the city, keeping his torch still burning, would be declared winner; those who let theirs go out, or who traveled slowly to protect the flames, would be greeted with hisses and blows by the crowd. Even the rich

gave vent to enthusiasm over this popular festival which produced so much merriment.

Near the Acropolis, when the procession was wholly within its walls, Alorcus discerned among the people a Celtiberian mounted on a horse covered with foam and sweat, beckoning him to approach.

Alorcus, turning away from the troop of horsemen, trotted towards him.

"What do you want?" he asked, in the harsh language of his country.

"I am one of your tribe, and your father is my chief. I have just reached Saguntum after traveling three days to say to you; 'Alorcus, your father is dying, and he calls for you.' The ancients of your tribe have ordered me not to return without you."

Actæon had followed his friend, breaking away from the sacred squadron, and witnessed the dialogue without understanding a word, although he guessed something disagreeable by the Celtiberian's pale face.

"Bad news?" he asked Alorcus.

"My father is dying, and he has sent for me."

"What shall you do?"

"I must go immediately. My people demand my presence."

The two horsemen began the descent to the city, followed by the Celtiberian messenger.

Actæon sympathized with his comrade's emotion. At the same time the curiosity of the traveler, so often aroused by the Celtiberian's tales, was awakened within him.

"Do you wish me to accompany you, Alorcus?"

The young man received the proposition with a look

of gratitude. Then he declined, saying that he must depart in haste; the Greek might wish to bid farewell to Sónnica; perhaps the separation would be a grief to her; and he desired to start on the journey at once.

"We will omit the farewell," said the Greek in his light, happy manner. "Sónnica will be resigned when I make known to her through a slave that I shall be absent for some days. Do you wish to leave immediately? I will accompany you. I am curious to see that land with its strange customs, and its valiant and sturdy inhabitants, of whose brave deeds you have so often told me."

They crossed the city. The streets were deserted. The entire population had gone up to the Acropolis. Actæon stopped a moment before Sónnica's warehouses to give the news of his journey to her slaves, and then he followed his friend, riding forth from the city.

Alorcus lodged in one of the inns in the suburb, an enormous edifice with extensive stables and broad courtyards, where continuously rang the diverse tongues of the interior of the Peninsula, hoarsened and made strident by dickering for merchandise and the bartering of beasts. Five men of the tribe accompanied the young Celtiberian during his stay in Saguntum, taking care of his horses and serving him as free domestics.

On learning that they were to depart these sons of the mountains shouted with joy. They had languished with inactivity in that rich and fruitful country amid customs which they detested, and they made preparations for the journey in haste.

The sun was setting when they started. Alorcus and Actæon rode in advance, their mantles thrown over

their heads, padded linen breastplates to protect their chests after the Celtiberian fashion, and short broadswords, and leather shields hanging at their sides. The five servants and the messenger brought up the rear, armed with long lances, driving the mules laden with Alorcus' clothing and provisions.

Throughout the afternoon they traveled upon the roads, being still in the Saguntine domain, and they passed cultivated and fruitful fields, beautiful villas and compact little towns clinging close around the tower which served them as defense. When night closed in they camped close to a miserable village in the mountains. There the territory of Saguntum ended. Beyond lay the tribes which were almost constantly warring with the people of the coast.

Next morning the Greek beheld a wholly different landscape. The sea and the green plains lay behind him, and he saw only mountains and more mountains, some covered with great pine forests, others red, with bluffs of bluish stone, overgrown with dense thickets which, brushed by the passing caravan, sent forth clouds of frightened birds, while terrified rabbits scampered under the very horses' hoofs.

The trails were not the work of man. The beasts laboriously picked their way in the tracks left by former travelers; they often twisted around masses of rock fallen from the summits, and again they forded streams which ran across their path. They skirted mountains; they climbed heights into a silent region seldom penetrated by man, where eagles screamed, flapping their wings in anger at this invasion. They rode down into gorges, deep crevices, in which reigned a

sepulchral penumbra and where buzzards hopped close by the dead body of some abandoned animal.

In the distance they saw beside a stream in a little valley, a group of mud-walled cabins with straw-thatched roofs, with an open hole to let light into the dwelling and to give exit to the smoke. The women, bony and dressed in skins, surrounded by naked children, came out of their hovels to stare at the passing caravan, with wild expressions of alarm as if the approach of strangers could only bring misfortune. Others younger, barelegged, with ragged aprons hanging from their waists, were reaping the stunted wheat, which barely rose like a golden film above the sterile, whitish earth. Girls, strong and ugly, with masculine limbs, came down from the mountains, bearing great bundles of fagots on their backs, while the men sat in the shade of nut and oak trees braiding bull-tendons for making their shields, or they practiced hurling darts and handling the lance, their tangled hair falling over bronzed and bearded faces.

On the highest points along the way appeared warriors of doubtful aspect, a mixture of bandit and shepherd, armed with long lances and carrying leather shields, mounted on small horses with long and filthy hair. They looked the company over, and after measuring its strength, and seeing it would be difficult to conquer, they turned back to their sheep pasturing in the deep mountain gorges filled with a tangle of shrubbery. The innumerable flocks of lambs and herds of cattle, accustomed to the wild solitude, fled terrified as they heard the passing of the caravan. Bevies of quail ran in search of food like gray ants among the rosemary and

thyme growing on the slopes, and flew away at the sound of the horses' hoofs, whirring like a hiss over the travelers' heads.

Actæon was interested in the rude customs of these people. The cabins were made of red adobe, or of stones laid in clay, and roofed with branches. The women, uglier and more energetic than the men, performed the fatiguing labor. Only boys worked, imitating their mothers. Young men early grasped the lance, and under the direction of their elders learned to fight on foot or on horseback; they broke the colts, springing to the ground, and mounting again while the horse was running, and they trained themselves to remain kneeling motionless on the horses' backs with their arms free to wield the sword and shield.

In some villages the party was received with traditional hospitality, and was welcomed even more affectionately on recognizing Alorcus, the heir of Endovellicus, the respected chieftain of the tribes of Baraeco which had pastured their flocks for centuries on the banks of the Jalón. When night came they gave up to them their best beds of woven thongs covered with fluffy dried grasses; they impaled a calf on a spit, turning it before an enormous bonfire, for regaling the caravan, and during the journey the women detained them at the entrance to their huts, offering them in coarse earthen vessels the bitter beer brewed in the valleys, and the bread made of acorn flour.

Alorcus explained the customs of his people to the Athenian. They gathered acorns, their chief food, exposing them to the sun until well dried. They husked and ground them, and stored the supply of flour for

six months. This bread, with game, and the milk of their animals, constituted their principal food. At intervals pestilence robbed them of their flocks, the crops failed, and hunger decimated the tribes; then the strong devoured the weak. Alorcus remembered hearing this from the elders of his tribe as having occurred in remote times when Neton, Autubel, Nabi, and other divinities of the land, irritated against their people, had sent upon them these fearful punishments.

The young Celtiberian continued telling of the customs. Some of the women who worked in the fields with so much vigor had perhaps given birth to a child the day before. As soon as born they immersed it in the nearest river, so that by this act, which in many cases caused death, it would grow vigorous and insensible to cold; and while the mother resolutely arose and continued her work, the husband took her place in the bed, lying down with the newly born child. The woman, still barely convalescent, took care of the two, surrounding the hale and hearty husband with comforts, as if in gratitude for the fruit he had given her.

Several times the caravan on its march passed men lying rigid and groaning on couches of herbs gathered by the wayside. Flies buzzed about their heads in clouds; an amphora of water stood within their reach. A child squatted near the couch brushing away the insects with a branch. They were sick people whom their relatives exposed by the roadside according to ancient custom, partly to implore the clemency of the divinities by exhibiting their misery, and also in order that passing travelers might advise a remedy, thus transmitting prescriptions from distant countries.

The strong men bathed in horse urine to harden their muscles. Their only luxury consisted in weapons. They admired as priceless jewels the bronze swords brought from the north of the Peninsula, and those of steel made by the people of Bilbilis and tempered in the sands of their famous river. The flexible cuirasses, formed by several thicknesses of superposed linen, or those of leather, decorated with nails, were defensive arms which the Celtiberian never laid aside, not even when in bed. They slept dressed in the sagum, the metal greaves on their legs, and their weapons within reach of the hand, ready to fight the instant the slightest alarm might disturb their sleep.

After three days of travel the caravan entered the territory belonging to the tribes of Alorcus. The mountains separated on both sides of the Jalón, forming smiling valleys covered by tall grasses, through which ran herds of wild horses with curling manes and waving tails. The women came out of the villages to greet Alorcus, and the men, grasping lances, mounted their horses and joined the caravan. In the first village where they stopped an old man told Alorcus that his father, the powerful Endovellicus, was dying, and in the next through which they passed in a few hours, he heard that the great chieftain had died at daybreak.

All the warriors of the tribe, herders and farmers, followed them on horseback. When they reached the village where the kinglet had lived, the escort had grown to a small army.

In the doorway of the paternal house, a low structure of red stones roofed with logs, Alorcus saw his sisters in dresses made of flowers and wearing around their necks

and over their heads cage-like collars from the bars of which hung mourning veils.

The sisters of Alorcus, as well as the women who accompanied them, the wives of the chief warriors of the tribe, hid their grief at the death of the chieftain, and smiled as if it were the eve of a festival. Old age was a disgrace among the Celtiberians, who held life in contempt, and fought for diversion when not engaged in war. To die in bed was deemed dishonorable, and the only thing which somewhat disturbed the serenity of the family of Endovellicus was that so famous a warrior, the terror of neighboring clans, should have died with white hair, his life flickering out like a wasted torch, after having galloped his steed through so many combats, hurling his sword like a thunderbolt upon the enemy.

Actæon's dress and his countenance attracted the curious gaze of all the tribe. Many of the Celtiberians had never seen a Greek, and they looked upon this one with hostile eyes, recalling the clever tricks and sharp dealings of the Hellenic merchants experienced by their brethren when they went down to Saguntum to sell silver from the mines.

Alorcus reassured his people.

"He is my brother," he said, in the language of the country. "We have dwelt together in Saguntum. Besides, he is not a native of that city. He is from very far away, from a land where the men are almost gods, and he has journeyed hither with me to become acquainted with you."

The women gazed at Actæon in astonishment on hearing the almost divine origin which Alorcus attributed to him.

The members of the caravan had dismounted, and entered the immense log structure which had served the chief for a palace. A vast room blackened by smoke, lighted only by narrow apertures like loop-holes, served as a place of reunion and council for the warriors of the tribe. At one end was an enormous stone, upon which was burning a wood fire, while a great opening in the roof did service as a chimney. Set in one wall was a stone slab, with the figure of the divinity of the tribe strangling two lions rudely sculptured upon it. Hung along the walls were lances and shields, skins of wild beasts, bleached craniums and twisted horns of large game. A stone bench ran along the sides of the room making way near the fireplace for a high masonry seat covered by a bear skin. Here the chieftain was accustomed to sit.

The warriors took their places on the bench as they entered.

One old man taking Alorcus by the hand, guided him to a place of honor.

"Sit here, son of Endovellicus. You are his only heir and you shall be our chief. May his valor and his prudence dwell in you."

The other warriors assented to the elder's words with grave nods of approval.

"Where is my father's body?" asked Alorcus, filled with emotion by the simple ceremony.

"Since the sun set it has slept in the meadow where you learned to break horses and to use arms. The young men of the tribe are keeping guard over it. The obsequies worthy of so great a chief will take place at

sunrise. Then, as our new king, you will give us counsel upon the great affairs of the tribe."

Alorcus compelled the Greek to sit beside him. The women filed in with torches, since no more than a dim twilight was produced by the pale, diffused glow filtering through the narrow slits in the wall. The sisters of Alorcus, with lowered eyes, their flowery tunics floating about their strong, virginal forms, passed before the warriors, offering drinking horns filled with metheglin and beer. The men imbibed enormously without losing self-control. They recounted the deeds of Endovellicus as if he had died many years before, and they told of the great enterprises in which his successor would surely lead them hinting again and again, in mysterious words, at a subject with which they must deal in the council on the morrow.

Supper was brought. The Celtiberians were not accustomed to eating at table like the people of the coast. They remained seated on the stone bench. The women placed beside them a wheaten loaf, instead of the acorn bread which was commonly eaten, this being an extraordinary feast. Others passed a great vessel filled with chunks of roasted meat still dripping blood, and each warrior speared a piece with the point of his knife. Horns overflowing with liquor circulated from hand to hand, and Actæon accepted with graceful mien whatever his neighbors, in hospitable phrase which he could not understand, offered him.

Supper being ended, the young men of the tribe came in with trumpets and flutes, and began to play a bizarre air which combined the joy of the chase with the fury of their charge upon the enemy in battle. The

guests were aroused, and the youngest among them, springing into the centre of the room, began to dance with gymnastic freedom. It was the dance with which the Celtiberians terminated their banquets, a violent exercise which put their muscles to the test, and caused them to regain their spirit even in moments of greatest depression.

Long before midnight the warriors retired, leaving Alorcus and Actæon alone in the great smoke-filled room, where sputtered the torches, tingeing the barbaric decorations on the walls with a blood-like hue. They slept on couches of aromatic herbs, without removing their clothing, their weapons near them, as slept all the tribe, ever fearful of attack from neighbors tempted by the multitude of their flocks.

At daybreak they went down to the meadow where the body of Endovellicus was exposed. The whole tribe was gathered on the plain near the river; the young men on horseback with their lances, and in full armor; the old men seated in the shade of the oak trees; the women and children near the pyre of logs upon which lay the corpse of their chief.

Endovellicus was arrayed in his war costume. His faded hair escaped beneath the borders of his triple-crested helmet; his silvery beard rested upon a cuirass of bronze scales; his muscular arms were naked, and his hands were clasped over the Celtiberian sword, short and slender, with broadened point, and his legs were bound by the broad straps of his sandals. His shield, engraved with a representation of the gods of the tribe struggling with two lions, served as a cushion for his head.

When the two young men arrived the same elder who had spoken to Alorcus the day before advanced. He was the wisest of the tribe, and had counselled Endovellicus many times before undertaking audacious expeditions. Under extraordinary circumstances he had laid open with his sacred knife the viscera of his prisoners to read the future in the quiverings of their entrails. Again he had cut off the hands of the conquered to dedicate them to the god of the tribe, nailing them to the chieftain's door to placate the divinity. Mystery used him as a mouthpiece and all the tribe regarded him with awe and fear, as if he were capable of changing the course of the sun and of destroying in a night the crops of an enemy.

"Advance, son of Endovellicus!" he said solemnly. "Look upon your people who choose you as most valiant and most worthy to succeed your father!"

He questioned the assemblage with a look, and the warriors answered by beating on their shields, uttering the same shouts with which they infuriated themselves on plunging into battle.

"You have become our king!" continued the elder. "You shall be father and guardian of your people! That you may fulfill your mission receive the great inheritance of your father! Bring hither the shield."

Two young men climbed to the top of the pyre, and raising Endovellicus' head, they brought down the shield engraved with the image of the god, and delivered it to Alorcus.

"With this shield," continued the venerable warrior, "you shall protect your people from the blows of the enemy. Bring hither the sword!"

The young men brought down the sword, drawing it forth from the stiff fingers of Endovellicus.

"Bind it upon you, Alorcus," continued the wizard. "With this you shall defend us, and may it fall like a thunderbolt wherever the destiny of your people points! Advance, youthful king!"

Guided by the elder, Alorcus stepped forward to the pyre upon which his father lay. He turned away his face that he might not behold the body, fearing an outburst of grief which would force him to shed tears before his tribe.

"Swear by Neton, by Autubel, by Nabi, by Caulece, by all the gods of our tribe, and of all the tribes that people this earth and hate the foreigners who one day came from across the sea to rob us of our riches. Swear to be faithful to your people and ever to obey the counsels of the warriors of your tribe! Swear it by the body of your father, which soon will be only ashes!"

Alorcus took the oath, and the warriors pounded upon their shields again, uttering acclamations of joy.

The old warrior, with extraordinary vigor, climbed upon the logs and searched beneath the cuirass of the corpse.

"Take this, Alorcus!" he said, on descending. He handed the new chieftain a slender copper chain from which hung a disk-like case of the same metal. "This is the greatest inheritance from your father—the manumission which accompanied him at all times. There is not a warrior in Celtiberia who does not carry upon his person his poison so that he may die rather than become the slave of the conqueror. I prepared this for your father. I spent a whole moon extracting it from the

wild apium, and one drop of it will kill like a lightning flash. If some day you fall vanquished, drink and die before your people behold their chieftain with a hand stricken off and serving the enemy as a slave."

Alorcus slipped the chain over his head, concealing the heirloom in his breast. Then he returned to Actæon, beneath the oaks where the ancients of the tribe were grouped.

The young men in the meadow, apprentices in the art of warfare, ran around the pyre with lighted torches. The flaming candlewood licked the resinous logs, and soon the smoke and flames began to enwrap the corpse.

The warriors most famous for valor and strength advanced, making their horses caracole round about the fire.

Waving their lances, they proclaimed with hoarse cries the deeds of the departed chief, the body of the tribe joining in the acclamation. They related the innumerable combats from which he had come forth victor; the audacious expeditions on which he had caught the enemy off their guard at night, burning their dwellings, and leading off interminable strings of captives; the flocks captured, for which there was barely pasture-ground in the territories belonging to the tribe; his colossal strength; the quickness with which he mastered the wildest colt; and the prudence which he demonstrated in all his counsels.

"He covered the doors of our houses with the hands of our enemies," shouted a warrior, galloping like a phantom through the smoke of the funeral pyre.

The multitude shouted with an intonation of lament.

"Endovellicus! Endovellicus!"

"All the tribes feared him, and his name was respected like that of a god!"

The multitude repeated the name of the chief over and over, as if weeping.

"With his hands of stone he would fell the bull in full career, and smite off the head of the enemy with a stroke of his sword!"

"Endovellicus! Endovellicus!"

Thus proceeded the last rites to the chieftain. The flames from the bier rose straight into the heavens clouding the blue sky with its pall of smoke, and the mourners tireless in heralding the deeds of their leader, passed and repassed like black demons crowned with sparks, making their horses leap over the flaming wood. The funeral pyre fell overwhelming the remains of Endovellicus with ashes and charring logs, while around the embers of the fire commenced the combat in honor of the dead.

The warriors advanced on horseback with slack rein, the shield held before the breast, the sword raised high, and they fought like irreconcilable enemies. The closest comrades, brothers at arms, dealt each other tremendous blows, with the enthusiasm of a people which turns fighting into a diversion. They must shed blood to glorify the memory of the deceased with greater pomp. Horses fell at the shock of the encounter and the riders continued the struggle on foot, wrestling body to body, making the shields resound with the force of the blows. When some of the warriors had retired covered with blood, and the combat had assumed the character of a general battle, in which, aroused by the spectacle, the women and children participated, Alorcus

ordered the trumpets to sound the retreat, and he hurled himself among the combatants to separate the more tenacious.

Thus ended the funeral rites. The slaves of the tribe flung the remnants of the bonfire into a ditch, and the crowd, seeing the festival over, before retiring to their villages, held aloft once more their horns brimming with beer, to drink to the honor of the new-made king.

The principal warriors turned toward the dwelling of the chief to hold council.

The Athenian traveled beside Alorcus, manifesting astonishment at the barbaric and warlike customs of the Celtiberians. As he could not understand their language, the warriors were not alarmed at seeing him take a seat in the council hall near their new chieftain.

The wizard discoursed at length to Alorcus, amid the respectful silence of the warriors. Actæon understood that he was giving an account of extraordinary events which had occurred in the tribe a few days before the arrival of the new king. Perhaps some call from friendly tribes, some fruitful expedition planned by the more venturesome.

He saw the face of Alorcus darken, as if they were telling him something painful, repugnant to his feelings. The assemblage looked at him fixedly, betraying in their eyes enthusiasm and agreement with the old man's words. Alorcus recovered his composure, listening calmly to the wizard, and when the latter ceased talking, after a long pause, he spoke a few words and with his head made a gesture of assent.

His rude countrymen received the chieftain's acceptance with ardor, and rushed from the house in vehement haste to carry the news to those outside.

When the Greek and the Celtiberian were left alone, the latter said sadly:

"Actæon, tomorrow I set out with my people. I begin to serve as chieftain of the tribe. I must lead it to combat."

"May I accompany you?"

"No. I know not where we are going. My father had a powerful ally whom I dare not name to you, and this ally calls me without saying why. The whole tribe displays tremendous enthusiasm for this expedition.

After a pause Alorcus added:

"You are welcome to stay here as long as you wish. My sisters will obey you as if you were Alorcus himself."

"No; since you will not be here, nothing remains for me to do. I have seen enough in one day to know the Celtiberians. I will return to Saguntum."

"Happy man, who can return to the Grecian life, to Sónnica's banquets, to the sweet peace of those merchants! May it never be disturbed, and may I be able to return there as a friend!"

The two preserved a long silence, as if black thoughts were whirling through their minds.

"You will return from this expedition loaded down with riches," said the Greek, "and you will come back to Saguntum to spend them joyously."

"May it be thus!" murmured Alorcus. "But I feel a presentiment that we shall never meet again, Actæon; or, if we meet, it will be to curse the gods that we should

ever have known each other. I go ignorant of my destination, and perhaps I must march against what I most love."

They said no more; they feared to give expression to their thoughts.

Greek and Celtiberian embraced tenderly. Then, after a sorrowful farewell, they kissed each other on the eyes in sign of fraternal friendship.

CHAPTER V.

INVASION

Sónnica feared that she had lost Actæon forever. His sudden departure seemed the caprice of a fickle Athenian —of an eternal wanderer, driven by the fever of seeing new lands. Only the gods could tell where that bird of passage might fly after his visit to Celtiberia! Perhaps he would remain with Alorcus; perhaps he would go to war along with those barbarians; perhaps, captivated by his knowledge and cleverness, they would go so far as to give him a kingdom.

Sónnica doubted that the Athenian would ever return. Her short springtime of love had been like the fugitive joy of the women adored by the gods when they had come down to earth. She who used to be so unfeeling as to mock at affection, now spent the days weeping on her couch, or wandering by night like a shade through the gardens, stopping in the grotto where the Greek had given her his first caress. The slaves wondered at the harsh and capricious temper of their mistress, who one moment groaned like a child, and the next, as if fired with sudden cruelty, ordered punishments for them all; but, without warning, Actæon presented himself before her villa one morning, riding a dusty, sweaty horse. He dismissed the ferocious featured barbarians who had served him as bodyguard, and ran with outstretched

arms toward the tremulous Sónnica. The whole of her immense dominions seemed resuscitated; the mistress smiled; the garden bloomed more beautifully; on the terrace shone the plumage of the rare birds with greater splendor; the instruments of the flute players sounded more joyful, and to the slaves, freed now from punishment, the air seemed sweeter and the sky more blue.

Sónnica's villa reawoke to its merry life, as if its owner had risen from the dead. The nights were devoted to feasting in the great triclinium; Sónnica's friends, the young gallants, accepted her invitations, and even Euphobias, the philosopher, reached his place at the table without having to fight his way through the blows of her slaves.

Sónnica was radiant, clinging to Actæon and listening to his words as to sweet music. The guests urged him to relate the story of his adventures among the Celtiberians, wondering at the customs of the tribes over which Alorcus reigned. Euphobias, the parasite, did not conceal his satisfaction at possessing so powerful a friend, and he declared that he would go to his kingdom to live awhile in comfort, without having to beg his bread from the merchants of Saguntum. Love's springtime returned for the Athenian. He spent his days at the villa, lying at Sónnica's feet, watching her spin the bright colored wool from the distaff or give the finishing touches to her toilette, assisted by her slaves. At the close of day they strolled through the garden, and night surprised them in the grotto, in fond embrace, listening to the song of the water falling into the alabaster basin with sweet, monotonous melody.

Now and again Actæon went to the city in the morn-

ing to stroll through the porticos of the Forum listening to the newsmongers with the curiosity of a Greek accustomed to the grumblings in the Agora. He noticed extraordinary stir in the great Saguntine market-square. The idle talked of war; the more bellicose recounted with exaggeration their achievements on the last expedition against the Turdetani, and the tranquil merchants left their counters to ask for news, accepting with gestures of despair the possibility of a coming struggle. As Actæon came into Saguntum he saw on the wall hundreds of slaves repairing the merlons worn by time, and filled with cracks which many years of peace had opened in them.

Mopsus, the archer, put him in touch with the deliberations of the elders. Hannibal had sent an emissary with an ultimatum to return to the Turdetani the conquered territories and the booty taken during their last expedition. The African threatened with insufferable arrogance, and the Saguntine Republic had answered with scorn, refusing to listen to his commands. Saguntum would only obey its strong ally Rome, and, secure in her protection, she looked with indifference upon the threats of the Carthaginian. However, as war seemed inevitable, and as all stood in fear of the youth and audacious character of Hannibal, two senators had embarked some days before at the port of Saguntum, setting sail for the coasts of Italy to relate what had taken place, soliciting the protection of the Roman Senate.

This news circulated confusedly through the Forum, and the crowd jested at Hannibal as an impetuous youth who needed a lesson. He might come against Saguntum whenever he wished. These Carthaginians

were the very same who had been driven out of Sicily, the same who had been compelled to abandon the coasts of Magna Grecia, being expelled by the Romans, who had then raised their own city beside the ruin! If they had achieved victories afterward in Iberia it was only against barbarian tribes ignorant of the art of warfare, who fell victims to their cunning! When they attacked Saguntum they would encounter a worthier enemy, and Rome, the powerful ally, would fall upon their rear and exterminate them!

These ideas infuriated the city.

News came that Hannibal had set forth upon his campaign and was slowly approaching, and with such tidings a gust of war seemed to sweep over Saguntum inflaming the minds of the most prudent. The peace-loving merchants with the mute choler of pacific-minded men who see their possessions endangered, stood in the doorways of their shops cleaning the rust from old arms, or they went down to the river bank to practise using them, mingling with the young men, who, since sunrise had been making their horses caracole, gaining skill in the management of the lance, or improving themselves in archery under the direction of Mopsus.

Actæon now began to spend his days away from the villa, deaf to the prayers of Sónnica, who longed to have him ever near her. The Senate had given him command of the peltasts, the light infantry, and at the head of some hundreds of young men, barefooted and with no other defensive arm than a cuirass of wool and a shield of osiers, he ran along the river bank, teaching them to hurl darts without stopping in their race, to wound an

enemy as they passed swiftly by his side, without giving him time to respond with another blow.

This exercise over, the perspiring youths dived into the river to refresh themselves with a swim, while the Greek slowly returned to the villa, lingering in the most smiling spots of the domain.

One afternoon the Athenian met Erotion, the potter, at the foot of an enormous cherry tree, gazing into the tallest branches, from which fell a shower of red fruit shaken down by an invisible hand. They had not met since the day when Actæon surprised him modeling before the nude shepherdess.

The youth greeted the Greek with a smile.

"Are you no longer busy?" asked Actæon with paternal kindness. "Have you finished your work?"

The boy answered with a gesture of indifference: "My work! Do not laugh at me, Greek. I have nothing to do."

"And where is Rhanto?"

"She is in the top of that tree, gathering the finest cherries for me. She climbs like a wood-nymph and she will not let me go with her. She is afraid I shall hurt myself."

The branches of the cherry tree shook, and the shepherdess descended, agile as a squirrel, her limbs bare, her skirt gathered up and filled with cherries. She and her lover devoured them amid laughter, their lips ruddy with the crimson fruit-juice, and they decorated each other's hair or hung yokes of cherries over their ears, forming picturesque ruby-colored earrings.

Actæon smiled at the strong, handsome young folks who ever sought each other's company and frolicked

as if they were in the heart of the desert, giving no heed to the danger threatening the city.

"But what about your art?" he asked.

Erotion and Rhanto laughed at the recollection.

"I smashed the figure to pieces," said the boy. "I broke the clay into fragments, and I have decided to touch no other than that in the pottery—when I make up my mind to return there."

He flung his arms around the shepherdess and rested his head upon her shoulder, rubbing his cheek against her neck with an almost feline caress.

"Why should I work?" he added. "I spent many days kneeling before that accursed clay, struggling to make it take on the form of her body; but it is useless. Clay is clay, and it cannot become living substance. When the soft flesh of my Rhanto is within reach of my hand, it is folly to grow desperate trying to mold earth into a semblance of her life. I wish to dream no more, Athenian. I will be content with what I have."

With sublime indifference he caressed his playmate in Actæon's presence.

"One day," continued the boy, "I saw clearly, and I understood the truth. Rhanto stood before me. Blinded by ambition I had seen in her only the model, but that day I beheld the woman. Why seek glory when I had love before me! Even though I should mould a great statue, what should I gain? That people should say, after I am dead, 'Erotion the Saguntine made this.' I should not hear it—after having spent my life working and suffering. No; let us live and love. That day I kicked the statue to pieces, and I embraced Rhanto with an enthusiasm of joy. Loving each other is better

than wasting time over clay puppets. Is not that so, Rhanto?"

They kissed each other again, heedless of the presence of the Greek. Actæon observed a transformation in the pair, both in the frank devotion of the boy, and in the glow in the eyes of the shepherdess. The ardor of love seemed to have made him more manly, and to have given her a suave and tender grace, a sweet abandon which she had lacked before.

"I have forgotten art, and now we are happy," continued the boy. "It would have been madness to have run off to Greece, leaving here a treasure which I had not fully appreciated. We spend our time wandering through the fields; we know mysterious corners in the groves sheltered by curtains of leaves, dark and perfumed hiding places which even Sónnica the rich might envy us. When we are hungry we milk Rhanto's goats and we rob a beehive; we climb trees in search of fruit; this is the glorious season of the year; the whole champaign is full of cherries."

He suddenly ceased speaking, fearing lest he had said too much. Perhaps Rhanto reproved him with a nudge. Then he added, in a supplicating tone:

"You are good, Athenian. Rhanto and I have looked upon you as an elder brother since that day we met you on the Road of the Serpent. Do not say anything to my father, nor to Sónnica. Let us be happy in this life of ours, which is worthy of the gods."

Actæon envied the felicity of these care-free youths, who loved each other frankly, living beneath the trees, strong and beautiful as wild creatures who had no thoughts beyond their companionship.

"Saguntum is about to be attacked. War is at our gates. Did you not know it?"

"We have not heard of it," said Erotion, with a scornful gesture. "I am interested in nothing but Rhanto."

"Are you not interested in the fate of your city?"

"I am more interested in the kisses of my shepherdess. As long as there be love, sunshine, and fruits, what does the rest of the world matter to me?"

"Have you no thought for your country, you truant?"

"Just now I have no thought for anything but these cherries, and for these red lips which are as fresh as they."

They parted, and Actæon long held the memory of the meeting. The light-heartedness of the loving couple filled him with envy.

The summer months passed. The vines of the domain ripened their clusters, the farmers rejoiced in the prospect of the coming crop hidden beneath the leaves, but from time to time, like a gloomy trumpet blast, came news of Hannibal, of his victories over the tribes of the interior who refused to recognize him, and of his imperious demands upon Saguntum.

Actæon scented the nearness of war, and this, which had ever been his principal occupation, now caused him only sorrow. He had grown to love this beautiful land as dearly as Greece. His soul, saturated with the sweet peace of the fertile fields, and of the rich industrious city, was saddened at the thought that this life was to be paralyzed. His existence had been spent amid struggles and adventures; and now, rich and happy, when he longed for peace in a corner where he hoped to

end his days, war, like a forgotten mistress who presents herself inopportunely, returned unbidden, forcing him anew to cruelty and destruction.

One afternoon, at the end of summer, he was pondering these things as he was riding toward the city. In the oblique rays of the sun the industrious bees, searching out the wild flowers, glistened like golden buttons. The vintagers were singing in the vineyards, stooping over their baskets. Actæon saw one of the slaves whom Sónnica kept in her warehouses in Saguntum come running from the direction of the city.

He stopped panting before Actæon. He was almost speechless from fatigue, and his broken words revealed his alarm. Hannibal was coming from the direction of Sætabis! The people from the country were crowding into the city in terror, driving their flocks before them. They had not seen the invader but they ran, horrified by the tales of the fugitives who were fleeing from the frontiers of the Saguntine territory. The Carthaginians had crossed the border; they were people of ferocious aspect, who bore strange arms, who looted the villages, and set them on fire. He was running to tell his mistress that she might take refuge in the city.

He rushed on toward Sónnica's villa. The Greek hesitated a moment; he deliberated whether he should go back in search of his beloved, but he ended by setting out on a gallop toward the city, and as he neared it, he rode at full speed around the walls. He went for a look at the highway from the mountains which gave Saguntum communication with the towns by a branch which led to Sæbatis and Denia. As he approached he

began to meet the refugees of whom the slave had told him.

They flooded the road like an inundation. The flocks and herds were bleating and lowing under the lash, crowding in between the wagons; women were running, carrying great bundles on their heads, and dragging along the children clutching at the folds of their tunics; boys were driving horses laden with furniture and clothing thrown together haphazard in the precipitation of flight, and ewes leaped to the sides of the road to escape the wheels which, catching their dragging fleece, almost crushed them.

The Greek, riding into the stream of fugitives, opened passage with his horse through the seething wave of wagons and animals, rustics and slaves, in which people of different towns were confusedly mingled, while members of scattered families were calling to one another desperately through the clouds of dust.

The fleeing multitude was clearing away. Actæon was beginning to meet the stragglers; poor old women traveling with vacillating step, bearing on their shoulders some lamb which constituted their entire fortune; old men crushed by the weight of pots and clothing; sick people dragging themselves along by the aid of a staff; abandoned animals wandering among the olive trees near the highway, that suddenly darted forward at full speed through the fields as if scenting their masters; children seated on a stone weeping, abandoned by their kindred.

Soon the road was empty. The last of the refugees were left behind, and Actæon saw before him only the narrow tongue of red earth winding along the mountain

slopes, without a solitary being to break the monotony of the road with his shadow.

The gallop of his horse resounded like distant thunder through the profound silence. It seemed as if Nature had expired as she guessed the approach of war. Even the ancient trees, the twisted olives which had stood for centuries, the great fig trees which rose like green cupolas against the mountain slopes, remained motionless, as if terrified at the approach of that something which caused the people to abandon their homes and to flee into the city.

Actæon rode through a village. Closed doors! Silent streets! From the interior of a cabin he thought he heard a faint groan—some sick person forsaken by his kindred in their haste to escape. Then he passed a great closed villa. Behind the high mud walls a dog was howling in despair.

Then once more solitude, silence, absence of life, a paralysis that seemed to creep over the fields. Night began to fall. From afar, as if diffused and mellowed by the distance, he heard a muffled booming; something like the surging of an invisible sea, the swelling roar of an inundation.

The Greek left the road; his horse began to climb a cultivated hill, his hoofs sinking into the red soil of the vineyards. From the height he could dominate the landscape for a great distance.

The sun's last rays dyed the mountain slopes a brilliant orange. On the winding red road shone like a rivulet of sparks the cuirasses of a group of horsemen approaching cautiously on a trot, as if exploring the way. Actæon recognized them; they were the Numidian cavalry with

white and floating mantles, while, mingled with them galloped other warriors of less imposing stature, waving lances and making their small horses caracole. The Greek smiled as he recognized Hannibal's Amazons, the famous squadron he had seen in New Carthage, formed of the wives and daughters of soldiers, commanded by the valorous Asbyte, daughter of Iarbas, the Garamantan of Fezzan.

Behind this group, the road was deserted for some distance. Against the background, like a dark monster moving with serpentine undulations, loomed the army, an immense girdle upon which glittered the lances like a line of fire broken at intervals by square bulks, which advanced like moving towers. These were the elephants.

Suddenly a new sun seemed to rise behind the army, illuminating its footsteps. A lurid light filled the horizon, and upon this ruddy background the serrated outlines of an immense mass were traced. A village was in flames. Hannibal's troops, composed of mercenaries from all countries, and from barbarian tribes in the interior, intended to terrify the hostile city, hence immediately upon entering Saguntine territory they laid waste the fields and set fire to the dwellings. Actæon feared to become surrounded by the Numidians and the Amazons, and riding down from the height he started toward Saguntum at a desperate gallop.

It was after dark when he reached the city, and he had to call his friend Mopsus and make himself known before the gate would open to him.

"Have you seen them?" asked the archer.

"Before the cock crows they will be before our walls."

The city presented an extraordinary aspect. The

streets were illuminated with bonfires. Pine torches burned in doorways and windows, and the multitude of fugitives huddled in the public squares, filling the porticos, and lying on the thresholds. All the Saguntines had streamed into the city.

The Forum was a camp. The flocks and herds were crowded between the four colonnades without space to move, stamping and bellowing; sheep sprang about on the steps of the temples; families of rustics boiled pots on the Attic bases of the marble columns, and the glow of so many fires, flickering on the façades of the houses, seemed to communicate a thrill of alarm to the entire city. The magistrates ordered the fugitives lying in the streets obstructing traffic to get up, and lodged them in the slaves' quarters of the dwellings of the rich, or had them conducted to the Acropolis to camp in its innumerable buildings. The herds also were driven thither by the light of torches, between a double row of almost naked men who beat the oxen when they tried to escape down the sides of the sacred mountain.

Rising above the murmur of the multitude sounded blasts from trumpets and conch shells calling the citizens to form ready for defending the walls. Merchants, dressed in bronze loricas, their faces covered by the Grecian helmet crested with an enormous brush of horsehair, issued from their houses, tearing themselves from the arms of wives and children, and strode majestically through the crowds of rustics, bow in hand, their spears over their shoulders, and their swords clanking against their nude thighs, their limbs covered to the knees with the copper greaves. The young men dragged to the walls enormous stones to hurl down

upon the besiegers, and they laughed on being assisted by the women who were eager to take part in the combat. Old men with venerable beards, rich members of the Senate, opened passage, followed by slaves with great bundles of spears and swords, distributing the arms among the strongest country people, first making sure if they were freemen.

The city seemed to rejoice. Hannibal was coming! The more enthusiastic had actually been anxious lest the African would not dare to present himself before their walls; but there he was, and all laughed, thinking that Carthage would perish in the fall of Hannibal here at the feet of Saguntum, as soon as Rome should rally to the aid of the city.

The Saguntine ambassadors were already in Rome, and her legions would soon arrive and crush the besiegers at a blow. Some, in their enthusiastic optimism, inclined to the marvelous, believing that, by a miracle of the gods, the great deed would happen within a few hours, and that as soon as day should dawn, at the very instant when Hannibal's army had begun to invest Saguntum, a countless galaxy of sails would appear on the blue of the Sucronian gulf—the fleet convoying the invincible veterans of Rome.

Nearly the entire city was on the walls. The multitude crowded upon them until many had to catch hold of the merlons to keep from falling.

Outside the ramparts darkness reigned absolute. The frogs that inhabited the pools along the river were hushed as if terrified; the dogs that wandered vagabond through the champaign barked ceaselessly; they sensed

the presence of hidden beings moving in the shadows surrounding the city.

Obscurity augumented the anxious uncertainty of the watchers on the walls. Suddenly a point of light pierced the darkness of the plain; another and then another flash, in different places at a distance from the city. They were torches guiding the steps of the approaching army. Before the ruddy spot of light silhouettes of men and horses were seen to pass. Far off on the hilltops gleamed bonfires, serving as signals to straggling troops.

These lights exasperated the more impatient. Some of the younger men could no longer remain inactive, and drawing their bows, began to shoot their arrows. Promptly came response from out the darkness. A whistling passed over the heads of the crowd, and from the houses near the wall some tiles flew off with a crash. Slingshots from the enemy!

Thus the night passed. When the cocks crowed announcing dawn a great part of the multitude had fallen asleep, wearied with straining their eyes into the darkness where buzzed the invisible foe.

When the sun rose the Saguntines saw Hannibal's entire army before their walls, on the side toward the river. Actæon, as he noted the location of the troops, could not repress a smile.

"He well knows the lay of the land. His visit to the city has stood him in good stead. Even in the dark he has chosen the only point from which Saguntum can be attacked."

The whole side of the mountain was free of besiegers. His army had encamped between the river and the lower part of the city, occupying the orchards, the gardens

of the villas, the beautiful section of which the rich of Saguntum were so proud.

Soldiers came and went through the luxurious villas, preparing their morning meal; they made kindling of sumptuous furniture to light their camp fires; they wrapped themselves in garments they had found, and they cut down trees to make room for setting up their tents. Across the river, over the immense domain, groups of horsemen scattered out to take possession of villages, of villas, of the innumerable buildings which rose above the verdure of the plain, abandoned to the mercy of the enemy.

The first things to attract the attention of the Saguntines, exciting a childish curiosity, were the elephants. They stood in a row on the opposite side of the river, enormous, ashen-hued, like tumescences uprisen from the earth within the night, their green-painted ears drooping like fans, from time to time waving their trunks which seemed like gigantic leeches, trying to suck in the blue of the sky. Their drivers, assisted by the soldiers, unbound the square towers resting on their backs, and rolled up the heavy trappings which covered their flanks when engaged in battle. They set them free, as if the fertile plain were to them an immense stable, their drivers being convinced that the siege would be a lengthy undertaking, and that while it lasted they would not need the assistance of the terrible beasts, so appreciated in battle.

Near the elephants, along the river bank, stood the engines of war, the catapults, the battering-rams, the movable towers, complicated structures of wood and

bronze, drawn by rosaries of double yokes of oxen having enormous backward curving horns.

As if suffering from an eruption the fields were covered with pustules of diverse colors, tents of cloth, of straw, or of skins, some conical, others square, the majority mound-shaped like ant hills, around which swarmed the armed multitude.

The Saguntines, from the top of the walls, examined the besieging army that seemed to fill the whole plain, and which was being joined by a ceaseless stream of new crowds on foot and on horseback, flowing in from every road, and seeming to roll down from the crests of the surrounding mountains. In was an agglomeration of diverse races, of different peoples; a bizarre collection of costumes, colors, and types, and those Saguntines who had been taught by travel recognized the different nations, and were pointing them out to their absorbed fellow citizens.

Some horsemen who seemed to fly, lying stretched along the backs of their swift barbs, were Numidians, Africans of feminine aspect, covered with white veils, wearing women's earrings and slippers, perfumed, with eyes painted black, but who were impetuous in combat and fought in full career using their lances with great skill. Around the camp fires in the gardens stalked athletic negroes from Libya, with kinky hair and glistening teeth, smiling in stupid satisfaction as they wrapped their naked limbs in garments of rich weave which they had just stolen, shivering with cold as soon as they drew away from the fire, as if suffering martyrdom in the cool morning air. These dark, shiny-skinned men, so seldom seen in Saguntum, excited the curiosity of the

citizens almost as much as the Amazons who audaciously passed on a gallop close to the walls to obtain a better view of the city. They were young women, slender, their skins bronzed by exposure. Their hair floated behind their helmets like a barbaric decoration, and they wore no other clothing than a broad tunic open on the left side, displaying sinewy limbs clinging to their horses' ribs. Over the breast some wore corselets of bronze-scales, also open on the left side to give greater freedom in fighting, displaying the roundness of their small breasts made firm and hard by fatiguing exercise. They rode their wild nervous horses bareback, guiding them with a delicate bridle, and as they galloped in groups the ferocious animals bit and kicked each other, thus enlivening the desperate race. The Amazons approached close to the walls, laughing and hurling insults which the Saguntines did not understand; they waved their lances and shields; and when a cloud of arrows and stones was flung after them, they dashed away, with wind-swept drapery, turning their heads to repeat their mocking gestures.

The besieged distinguished in the dark crowd of soldiers the cuirasses of certain horsemen which shone like plates of gold. They were the Carthaginian captains, some rich men of Carthage who followed Hannibal, sons of opulent merchants who marched with the army more like shepherds than like chiefs, covered with metal from head to foot for protection against blows, and, with the genius of their race, more devoted to administering the conquests and in sharing the booty than in seeking glory in combat.

In addition to these people, those on the walls who

were familiar with them pointed out the other troops of the besieging army. Some with skin the color of milk, with faded mustaches, and red horsehair tied to the crowns of their heads, who laid aside their military cloaks and tall boots of untanned leather to bathe in the river, were Gauls. The others, bronzed and so thin that their skeletons were outlined as if they would push through the skin, were Africans from the oases of the great desert, mysterious people, who with the beating of their small drums caused the moon to descend, and by playing the flute forced venomous serpents to dance. Mingling with them were the bulky Lusitanians, with limbs as strong as columns, and broad rock-like chests; those from Bætica, united to their horses day and night by a love which lasted all their lives; the hostile Celtiberians, bushy-haired and dirty, wearing their rags with arrogance; tribes from the North, who worshipped solitary menhirs as gods, and in the moonlight sought mysterious herbs for charms and philters; men of ferocious customs, in perpetual battle with hunger; barbarian people of whom horrifying tales were told, believed to devour the bodies of the conquered after a victory.

The Balearic slingers provoked laughter in spite of their ferocious aspect. From the walls the observers commented on the extravagant customs which prevailed in their island home, and the multitude burst into laughter contemplating the almost naked youths, carrying sticks with charred points which served them as lances, and having three slings, one wound around the forehead, another about the waist, and the third held in the hand. One of these slings was of horsehair, one of

esparto, and the third of bull tendon, and one or the other was used according to the distance they had to throw.

They lived on their islands in caves or in the hollow spaces between huge masses of rock, and they were taught to use the sling while mere children. Their fathers set their bread some distance from them, and would not let them eat it until they had brought it down with a pebble. Their passion was drunkenness, and woman their strongest appetite. In combat they turned with scorn from prisoners who would bring high ransom to capture the women, and they not infrequently would exchange six strong slave men for a single slave woman. On the islands they were unfamiliar with gold and silver; the elders divining the evils of money, had prohibited the importation of coins, and the Balearic slingers in the service of Carthage, unable to carry their earnings to their country, spent their wages in drink or flung them generously into the hands of the loose and wretched women who followed the army. Their traditional customs amused the Saguntines. At their weddings, so said those who had visited the islands, it was customary for all the guests to embrace the bride in advance of the husband, and at funerals the corpse was beaten until the bones were crushed and converted into a shapeless mass which they forced into a narrow urn and buried under a heap of stones. Their slings were terrible. They hurled to great distances balls of sun-baked clay, conical at their ends, and bearing grotesque inscriptions dedicated to the one who received the blow, and in battle they flung stones weighing a pound with such force that the highest tempered armor failed to resist them.

In the rear of this warlike crowd ragged women of all colors scattered through the champaign; lean, naked children who did not know their parents; the parasites of war, who marched at the tail of the army to revel in the spoils of victory; females who at night lay down in one extreme of the camp and arose on the opposite in the morning, and, aged in the prime of their youth by fatigue and blows, died forsaken by the roadside; youngsters who looked upon all the soldiers of their race as their fathers, bearing on their backs on long marches the firewood or the flesh-pot of the warriors, and, in moments of fiercest struggle, when the fighting was hand to hand, they slipped between the adversaries' legs and bit them like rabid cur-dogs.

Actæon found Sónnica on the wall, gazing at the hostile camp in the first streak of dawn. The beautiful Greek had taken refuge in Saguntum the night before, followed by slaves and flocks, moving part of her riches from the villa to her warehouse. She had left behind rooms filled with paintings and mosaics; rich furniture, sumptuous table-service, all which would fall into the hands of the victor. And she and her fellow Greek saw peeping through the distant foliage the terrace of the villa with its statues, the tower of the doves and the roofs of the houses of the slaves, over which men, barely discernible, were running like insects. The invaders were there; perhaps they would amuse themselves by shooting their arrows at the brilliantly plumaged Asiatic birds, and by beating the old and sick slaves abandoned in the flight. Between the banana trees in the garden rose the smoke of a bonfire. The Greek woman and her lover guessed the destruction and rapine that were

taking place. Sónnica grew sad, not at the loss of a part of her riches, but because they were rending her heart through destroying a place which had been witness to her first outbursts of love for the Athenian.

Some time after sunrise the Saguntine people cried out with indignation. Along the Road of the Serpent appeared groups of drunken and shouting women embracing soldiers. They were the *lupas* of the port, the miserable harlots who thronged around the temple of Aphrodite by night, and who were denied entrance to the city. When the first Carthaginian horsemen passed through the port these creatures had followed them with enthusiasm. Accustomed to the coarse blandishments of men of all countries, the presence of these soldiers, so different in dress and nationality did not seem strange to them. The 'wolves' of the land were the same as those of the sea. They adored strong men, birds of prey which could destroy them with their talons, and they followed the Carthaginians to their camp, rejoicing in their hearts at the chance to approach the city without fear of punishment, and at being able to mock the besieged inhabitants with the concentrated odium of long years of humiliation.

They sang like mad women, flitting from one pair of greedy and trembling hands to the next which disputed for them as if in their eagerness they would tear them to pieces. They drank to intoxication from amphoræ of rich wines sacked from the villas; around their shoulders they flung cloths with threads of gold, stolen but a moment before; the Numidians with their moist gazelle-like eyes, looked upon them admiringly, bedecking them with crowns of grass, and they in turn bursting into

bacchanal laughter, petted the kinky hair of the Ethiopians, who giggled like children, displaying their sharp cannibal teeth.

They gave themselves up to all manner of ribaldry near the long line of horses staked out in front of the tents, displaying their wantonness as a shameless insult to the besieged city, and the Saguntines who had witnessed undaunted the approach of the long defile of the enemy trembled with ire behind their merlons as they witnessed this offense of their courtesans.

"The wretches! *Caninæ*!"

The women of the city hissed and reviled them, pale with fury, leaning over the walls ready to spring into the camp to lay hold upon the strumpets, while they, as if the anger of the city only stimulated them, redoubled their laughter, adding insult to insult, and exciting the whole army to join with them.

A fresh cause of indignation infuriated anew the minds of the Saguntines. Some thought they saw something familiar in the appearance of one of the Celtiberian warriors riding at the head of a troop of cavalry. His gallant bearing on his horse, the arrogance with which he galloped with firm seat in the saddle, recalled to many the sightly procession of the Panathenaic festival. When he dismounted and removed his helmet, wiping away the sweat, all recognized him, and raised a shout of resentment. Alorcus! Even he! Another ingrate, faithless to the city which had overwhelmed him with honors and distinctions! His duty as chieftain compelled him to ignore his fraternal reception in Saguntum.

Blind with rage they drew their bows against him but the arrows fell short of the spot where the Celtibe-

rians were encamped. The maddened crowd experienced one slight consolation. The groups along the wall made way for Theron, the priest of Hercules, who advanced with the majesty of a god, his eyes fixed on the enemy, insensible to the general adoration which surrounded him.

The Saguntines persuaded themselves that they beheld Hercules himself, who perhaps had abandoned his temple on the Acropolis to come down to their walls. He was nude; an enormous lion skin covered his back. The wild beast's claws were crossed over his breast, and his head was covered by the cranium of the animal, with bristling whiskers, sharp teeth, and yellow glass eyes which shone between the tossed golden mane. His right hand clutched without visible effort the entire trunk of an oak tree which served him as a cudgel in imitation of the mace of the god. His shoulders towered above all other heads. His breasts were round and strong as shields, on which the veins and sinews were traced like tendrils winding round the muscles, and his columnar limbs, all excited admiration. His virility was the very type of sovereign power. He was so enormous that his head seemed small between his great shoulders, exaggerated in size by the cushion of his muscles; his chest heaved like a bellows, and instinctively all took a step backward, fearing contact with that machine of flesh created for strength.

Sónnica's friends, the young gallants, who, even on this extraordinary occasion had not forgotten to paint their faces, followed and admired him, ordering the crowd to give them passage.

"Hail, Theron!" shouted Lachares. "We will see what Hannibal will do when he meets you in battle."

"Hail to the Saguntine Hercules!" replied the other youths, leaning weakly on the backs of their little slave boys.

The giant looked over the encampment, in which trumpets began to sound, and the soldiers ran to form in rank. The slingers cautiously advanced, sheltering themselves behind buildings and hummocks. The attack was about to begin. On the walls the bowmen drew their bows, and the boys piled up stones to hurl with their slings. The old men compelled the women to retire. At the head of the stairway leading up to the top of the wall, Euphobias the philosopher stood haranguing in the midst of a group, paying no heed to the indignation of his hearers.

"Blood is going to flow," he shouted; "you will all perish, and for what? I ask you what do you gain by not obeying Hannibal? You will always have a master, and it is just as well to be friends of Carthage as of Rome. The siege will be prolonged, and you will die of hunger; I shall outlive you all, because I know hunger from of old like a faithful friend. But again I ask you, what more does it profit you to be Romans than Carthaginians? Live and enjoy! Leave shedding of blood to the butchers, and before you think of putting another man to death, study your own selves. If you would give heed to my wisdom, if instead of scorning me, you would feed me in exchange for my advice, you would not be shut up in your city like foxes in a trap."

A chorus of imprecations and a row of threatening fists answered the philosopher.

"Parasite! Slave of poverty!" they shouted. "You are worse than those *lupas* who throw themselves at the barbarians."

Euphobias, whose insolence increased as the indignation blazed higher, opened his mouth to reply; but he hesitated, beholding a dark mass which shut out the sunlight. The gigantic Theron was before him, looking at him as scornfully as would one of those elephants that the besiegers had near the river. He raised his left hand carelessly, as if he were going to flip off an insect; he barely grazed the insolent face when the philosopher tumbled down the steps from the wall, his head bleeding, silent, bumping from step to step without a groan, like a man accustomed to such caresses, and convinced that pain is but a figment of the imagination.

At the same moment a cloud of black arrows whistled over the walls like a flock of birds. Tiles flew off, bits of plaster sprang from the merlons, and some fell from the wall with broken heads. From between the merlons stones and arrows leaped as an impetuous answer.

The defense of the city had begun!

CHAPTER VI

ASBYTE AND HANNIBAL

HANNIBAL lay tossing between the bright-hued coverings of his couch, unable to conciliate sleep.

The cocks had announced midnight, breaking the silence of the camp with their shrill voices, and the chieftain was yet awake, closing his eyes though unable to sleep. His rest was disturbed by the singing of a nightingale perched in a great tree from the branches of which hung his tent.

An earthenware lamp illuminated the mass of objects strewn carelessly around his bed. On the floor glistened cuirasses, greaves, and helmets, over which were thrown rich fabrics stolen from the Saguntine villas. Grecian furniture, delicately wrought toilette amphoræ, tapestries with mythological scenes, lay in a heap mingled with rawhide whips, shields of hippopotamus hide, and the rags of Hannibal's personal costume, for, though a lover of glittering arms, he was careless and dirty in his dress. Elegant Grecian vases he put to the vilest uses. An alabaster crater covered by a shield served as a seat; a huge terra cotta vase, decorated by a Grecian artist with the adventures of Achilles, the African scornfully used in a manner calculated to express the height of his contempt for refinement. Pieces of statues and columns destroyed during the tempest of invasion

were sunk in the ground, making seats for Hannibal's captains when a council was held in the chieftain's tent. It was the spoil of war, looted and thrown about in a fever of robbery. Only a small portion of it had reached the chief, who felt absolute scorn for artistic beauty except when stamped on precious metals. He sneered at the gods of this land as he did at those of his own country and of the world; he spat upon the marble forms of divinities which filled the camp, as if they were scraps of worthless stone, good for nothing but to be hurled by a catapult against the enemy.

Impelled by nervous excitement, which prevented his sleeping, he raised up in his couch, and the lamplight shone full upon his face. He was no longer the Celtiberian shepherd, dishevelled and ferocious, whom Actæon had met in the port of Saguntum. Divested of his disguise he showed what he was—a young man of medium height, with strong and well proportioned limbs, without display of exaggerated muscles, but revealing in his body the temper of steel, a vitality capable in supreme moments of the most stupendous achievements. His face was slightly bronzed, and his hair lay around his head in thick short curls like a black and lustrous turban, completely covering his forehead, and leaving exposed the lobes of his ears, from which hung great discs of bronze. His beard was thick and curly; his nose straight and somewhat prominent, and his eyes, large and imperious, always looked sidewise, with an expression of profound astuteness and unapproachable reserve. His muscular neck was habitually bent, inclining his head toward the right, as if to more clearly catch the sounds around him.

He wore a simple, dirty, and threadbare sagum, like any one of those Celtiberians who lay snoring in the tents roundabout, and, as a sign of command, there shone on his wrists two broad golden bracelets, which added strength by their confinement of the tendons and muscles of the arm.

For more than a month he had been before the walls of Saguntum without achieving any advantage. He had spent the whole of that afternoon directing his engines of war without result, and now in his solitude this want of success irritated his nerves, and dispelled his sleep. The petted child of victory, he had conquered in open fight the most savage tribes of Iberia; he had dragged his elephants over the crests of lofty mountains, crossing rivers, breaking trails through forests, seeing warlike hordes fall prostrate before him as if he were a god, but now, for the first time in his life he encountered a stubborn enemy, which behind sheltering walls mocked at him and would not suffer him to advance a step.

The city of merchants and farmers which he had studied from within, looking scornfully upon its opulence and effeminacy, threatened to break the current of his good luck, and, finding it indomitable, and reflecting upon his enemies in Carthage, upon the wrath of Rome, and realizing that time was passing while he was making no headway, the chieftain experienced a gust of anxiety.

He had chosen well the vulnerable point of Saguntum. His engines of war were placed before the lower part of the city where the walls projected into the valley, upon an open, level plain, which permitted the advance of the battering-rams; but scarcely had the hundreds of naked men who dragged the heavy machines come

within range than such a shower of arrows fell about them that those who were not pinned to the ground had to flee for their lives.

Sometimes, under cover of the mantelets, which advanced on wheels, and through the loopholes of which the Carthaginian bowmen shot, they managed to get the battering-rams to the foot of the wall, but while that part of the city was the most exposed to attack, the ramparts which in the upper portion of Saguntum were of adobe had here a stony rock base, and in vain the bronze rams'-heads which formed the ends of the beams, pounded and pounded, operated by hundreds of arms. Showers of arrows and stones fell upon the besiegers, breaking the shields which covered them. A great tower dominated the whole area around the assailants, sowing death among them without exposure to the besieged, and not content with this, under the impulse of their passion, they frequently sprang forth from behind the ramparts, knifing the Carthaginians.

Each of these sallies cost Hannibal's army severe losses. The Africans had begun to tell with superstitious dread of a naked giant, wearing a lion's skin, and brandishing a tree-trunk, who charged at the head of the Saguntines, and at each blow ploughed a broad furrow through the assailants. The Ethiopians saw in him a terrible and sanguinary divinity, like those which they worshipped in their oases; the Celtiberians declared that it was Hercules, descended from Olympus to protect the city.

Hannibal recognized him in the battles from afar. It was Theron, the priest whom he had seen one morning on the Acropolis, and whose extraordinary vigor he

had admired. But in spite of knowing his human origin, he could not overcome the terror of the troops at the instant when they saw towering above all the helmets that invulnerable lion's head which seemed to change the course of the arrows and stones.

Moreover the besieged counted on the assistance of the phalaric. It was well known that among the merchants and agriculturists there figured men expert in war, who had traveled through many lands. The memory of his boyhood companion, Actæon, the Greek adventurer, surged through Hannibal's mind. He, surely, must be the introducer of the phalaric, a dart wrapped in tow and dipped in pitch. The shaft sped blazing through the air like a stream of fire, with its long iron head capable of piercing the shield and the cuirass, and even if the terrible missile should not penetrate the armor, its flames set fire to the clothing; the combatants threw down their arms to put out the fire, and thus stood exposed to the blows of the enemy. The same warriors who had fought against the most determined and barbaric tribes of Iberia, flung away their shields and fled before those meteors of fire which came from the walls of Saguntum whistling and scattering sparks.

Thus time passed; the besiegers gained nothing, and Hannibal was dominated by a galling impatience. Fire of Baal! He, chained to these walls which he could not make his own, while Hanno's faction was conspiring in Carthage, preparing the downfall of the Barcas if he should fail in taking Saguntum; planning, perhaps, his delivery to Rome when she should demand him on finding her treaties violated. In despair he threw himself back once more upon his couch, seeking the oblivion

of sleep with the eagerness of one who must needs forget. He blew out the light, but lay open-eyed in the darkness. The bluish glint of the moon filtered through an opening in the cupola of his tent, shimmering upon the cuirasses which in the darkness shone like phosphorescent fishes. Outside, the nightingale continued singing.

Hannibal grew frantic. Accursed bird that was keeping him awake! He could sleep in the din of battle! Accustomed from boyhood to the camp, the hoarse songs of the mercenaries and the whinnying of horses would fail to arouse him, and the harsh trumpet-blast of war had been his lullaby. But the sweet song of that bird, its incessant melodious trill, annoyed him like the buzzing of a hornet.

He sprang from his couch; he groped in the dark amid the litter of arms, fabrics, and furniture; he burst out through the doorway of his tent, and the fresh night soothed his tempestuous spirit.

The moon was shining in a cloudless sky; the breeze was warm, although it was the end of autumn; stars scintillated; the nightingale's trills were answered by another and yet another bird, throughout the expanse of the valley. The camp lay at rest. The flames were flickering out from dying bonfires near which soldiers were sleeping along with women and children of the army, wrapped in rags and in rich stolen fabrics; the horses picketed to the ground, pointed their nodding heads in a straight line; in the distance, the beleaguered city crouched dark and silent as if asleep, but a faint glow escaping through loopholes in its walls produced the effect of half-open eyes watching while feigning sleep.

Hannibal leaped over the trusted soldiers who slept near the door of his tent. They raised up as they heard his footsteps, but recognizing the chief, lay down on the ground again and continued snoring. They were veterans from Hamilcar's wars, who looked with almost religious veneration on the lion cub of their old captain.

As he turned the corner of the tent he drew his bow to shoot at the bird hidden in the foliage; but he started in surprise on seeing a white figure standing near the trunk of the tree, shining in the moonlight.

It was a woman, an Amazon. On her head and on her breast glistened the helmet of gold and the cuirass of scales; her white linen tunic fell over her limbs, outlining her form, and her strong bare arms were resting on her lance with its shoe driven into the ground. Her dark eyes were fastened on Hannibal's tent with strange, unblinking persistence, as if she were dreaming awake, and the night-wind lightly swayed her floating hair. Behind her stood a black horse with glossy coat, nervous legs, and eyes injected with blood, destitute of saddle or bridle, his mane unbound; he was bending down to lick the border of the Amazon's tunic and her nude feet, like a dog which followed her everywhere.

"Asbyte!" exclaimed Hannibal, surprised at the apparition. "What are you doing here?"

The queen of the Amazons seemed to awake, and seeing the chief, she fixed on him the moist and impassioned gaze of her large eyes.

"I could not sleep," she said with a voice languid and measured. "I spent the first part of the night dreaming horrible dreams. The Goddess Tanith will

not guard my repose, and I have seen the shade of my father Iarbas announcing my approaching death."

"Death!" exclaimed Hannibal, laughing. "Who thinks of death?"

"Am I then immortal? Do I not fight like any one of your soldiers? I hurl myself impetuously through forests of lances; feathered shafts hiss around me like a trailing mantle of invisible birds; I scorn the phalarics with their streams of fire—but some day I shall die; my dreams foretell it."

Asbyte, as if fearing to show too great melancholy in the presence of Hannibal, added bitterly:

"Let death come when it will! It does not frighten me as it does the merchants of Carthage who hate you. If it disturbed my sleep it was because when I awoke I thought of you. I cannot explain to myself why I thought that you also might die, and to your death, Hannibal, I cannot be resigned. You should live long like a god. I knew that you sleep alone in your tent; that, to better conceal your movements you keep no guards to watch while you slumber, and I felt the need of doing something for you, of spending the night leaning on my lance near your couch to prevent the treachery of an enemy."

"What madness!" exclaimed the African, laughing.

"Hannibal," said the beautiful Amazon gravely, "remember Hasdrubal, the husband of your sister. The dagger of a slave was enough to put an end to him."

"Hasdrubal was doomed to die," said the chieftain, with the conviction of fatalism. "The fate of Carthage demanded his death. It was necessary that Hasdrubal should succumb to make way for Hannibal. But Hannibal has no one to replace him, and he shall live even though

he were to sleep surrounded by enemies. My sleep is light and my arm is sure; he who slips into the tent of Hannibal enters his tomb."

Asbyte contemplated with loving admiration the young hero, who had flung down his bow, and while he spoke of his strength he raised his powerful arms, and the moon enlarged their shadow in such wise that as they moved he seemed to embrace the camp, the city, the whole valley, like a supernatural being.

The Amazon drew near leaning her lance against the trunk of a tree. On laying down her weapon she seemed to throw off her warlike mien, and she approached Hannibal with feminine sweetness, gazing upon him with the moist, timid eyes of the antelopes that frisk about the oases of her native land.

"Besides," she murmured, "I came because I needed to be near you. To guard your sleep gives me indescribable joy. I feel the delight of an exalting sacrifice in keeping vigil over you when you know it not. I never have an opportunity to speak with you. By day I see you on horseback among the Carthaginians with their golden armor, who flock around you; on foot directing those who push the engines of war, helping them, often, to excite their enthusiasm; but I see you always from afar, as a chieftain, as a hero, never as a man. Do you remember those days in the citadel of New Carthage when I had just arrived from Africa with the reinforcements which caused you to utter shouts of enthusiasm?"

"Asbyte! Asbyte!" murmured Hannibal, repelling her with a movement of his arms, as if the recollection annoyed him.

"Do not be angry, Hannibal; listen to me. I must

speak to you. Give me at least the consolation of seeing you near, of telling you what I feel. If not, why have I come to Iberia, joining my fate to yours?"

The chieftain glanced around, as if fearing that someone might be listening to his conversation with the Amazon.

"Fear not," said Asbyte, divining his thought. "Mago, your brother, sleeps far from here with Maherbal, the favorite captain. My Numidians are at the opposite end of the camp. You surround yourself only with Iberians in order to encourage their fidelity with such a proof of confidence, and they do not understand Phœnician."

Reassured by Asbyte's answer, Hannibal lowered his head and crossed his arms, resigned to listen.

"You are as hard and disdainful as a god," sighed the Amazon. The woman who loves you feels within her the fire of Moloch, and you will not deign to quench it even with a glance of kindness, nor with a smile. You have a heart of bronze; your eyes ever gaze aloft, and you cannot see those who crawl to approach you. You imagine that you have made me happy because you lead me from battle to battle, from conquest to conquest, and you consider that my happiness consists in having my hands, which used to be adorned with rings, calloused by the lance; my face, which in other times was covered with costly unguents brought from Egypt by my caravans, hardened by the cheek-pieces of the helmet. I have become rude and fierce like a man. Though I possess gardens far away where an eternal springtime dwells, I have suffered hunger and thirst at your side. I know not who I am; I doubt my

sex, seeing my body made ugly by fatigue. My skin, over which the hands of my slaves used to slip as if it were a mirror, is now as hard as that of a crocodile. If I do not seem as hideous as the troop of wasted females which follows your soldiers it is because my youth has not forsaken me. And all this for whom? For you who will not deign to look at me; for you who have forgotten our first meeting; for you who see in Asbyte only a good friend, an esteemed ally, who came to you bringing a strong array of fighters. Hannibal! Lightning-flash of Baal! You are as great as a demigod, but you do not know human beings. You see in me only an Amazon, a warrior virgin like those of whom the Grecian poets sing—but I am a woman!"

Asbyte sadly and silently searched the face of the pensive Hannibal.

"You have forgotten, perhaps, how we met," she added, presently, with melancholy tone. "I dwelt happy in my oasis until I rushed to your side, drawn by some irresistible charm that emanates from your person. I, the daughter of Iarbas the Garamantan, wearied of the comforts of my house, of the songs of my slaves, and of the splendors which the merchants flung from the caravans at my feet, went into the desert hunting lions with Iarbas, and the warriors marveled when the most savage colts trembled, obedient and timid, as soon as they felt me on their backs. I was strong, and I was beautiful. Scarcely had I grown out of my girlhood than the bravest of the Numidian sheikhs came seeking hospitality of my father that they might see me, and they told of their flocks and of their warriors, proposing an alliance to Iarbas. And I, indifferent, cold, kept my

thoughts ever on Carthage where I once had been in company with my father to adjust the tribute with the rich men of the Senate. Ah, the magnificent city, the immense city, with her temples as huge as towns and her gigantic gods!"

Wandering from the trend of her ideas, she fell into enthusiastic reminiscence of Carthage, the great city which after all her travels and warlike adventures was still a vivid memory. She called to mind the dwellings of the rich Carthaginians, with their polychrome walls finished by brilliant spheres of metal and of glass; the great marble temples, with their mysterious groves through which resounded the lyres and cymbals of the priests; the temple of Tanith surrounded by rose gardens, perfumed hiding places which served as shelters for the sacred phallic rites in honor of the goddess; and then the port, the immense port, with a whole city of ships which poured into the metropolis a continual stream of riches from all over the world, tin from Brittania, copper from Italy, silver from Iberia, gold from Ophir, frankincense from Saba, amber from northern seas, purple from Tyre, ebony and ivory from Ethiopia, spices and pearls from India, and brilliant fabrics from nameless and mysterious peoples of Asia who dwelt at the uttermost borders of the world, wrapped in the mists of legend.

She adored the city, not only for its splendors, but far more because it harbored partisans of the Barcas, the supporters of the heroic family whose deeds the Numidian warriors recounted in the moonlight, and of whom Hannibal, who added renown to his name in the wars of Iberia when still a boy, was the glorious descendant.

"My people ever loved your people," continued the Amazon. "If my father Iarbas submitted to the domination of Carthage, it was because at the head of it was Hamilcar, an African, a Numidian like ourselves. I hate the Carthaginian merchants as bitterly as you do—those ancient Phœnicians from the rock-bound Aradus who prospered and reproduced like worms, afterwards to cross the sea and take possession of our beautiful soil of Africa. I hate the ship figured upon so many of your coins and temples, because it is the sign of the avaricious people who came to exploit us, but I adore the Carthaginian charger, the Numidian horse, the symbol of our past."

Then she spoke of the charm which the glory of the Barcas had exercised over her mind from afar. She had loved Hannibal without realizing it, influenced by tales of his achievements which had reached her ears. She imagined him fighting like a young lion at his father's side, among herds of bulls with flaming horns, and among burning chariots which the Iberians drove against the Carthaginian invader; she thought of him, mad with fury, before the body of Hamilcar, and then languishing from inaction beside the beautiful Hasdrubal, conciliatory and pacific, until the moment when, his brother being assassinated by the dagger of a Gaul, the whole army acclaimed the youth as chieftain.

Her father Iarbas had just died, and she, now become queen of her tribes, heard that Hannibal, thirsting for glory and for combat, was isolated in the fortress of New Carthage, with no other troops than the remnant of the army which Hamilcar had taken to Iberia. The rich of Carthage, enemies of the Barcas, fearing the popu-

lace, dared not deprive Hamilcar's son of the chieftancy which his soldiers tendered him; they confirmed it by their silence, but they kept him isolated, without resources, left to his own devices, so that the natives should put an end to him, or at the most, that he might conquer a small territory on the Iberian coast in which the ambition of the Barcas would gradually become extinguished.

"Then I flew to your side," continued Asbyte. "I wished to know the man and to save the hero. I turned over a great part of my riches to the merchants of Carthage for the loan of their ships; I kindled the enthusiasm of the most warlike of my tribes to follow me; even their daughters imitated me, and went lion hunting, galloping all day long, lance in hand, drawn on by my mad adventure, and one afternoon, when perhaps you were weeping, believing your hopes of glory dead, you beheld from the height of the citadel of New Carthage a whole fleet coming from Africa. Do you remember? Tell me! Do you remember how you received me?"

"Yes, and I shall never forget it," said Hannibal gently. "Those days are my happiest memory."

"You received me as if I were a divinity, as if Ashtoreth, who illumines our nights had descended from the sky to give you her protection. You were oblivious to my warriors and saw only me, and scorning your ambitions for the moment we spent the nights lying on the terrace of the citadel, and the stars were witnesses to our interminable embraces. But, alas! that joy was like the roses from Egypt which last but a day in the vases of the rich women of Carthage. Soon the pride of con-

quest returned to you, the ambition of the chieftain. You admired the training of my Numidians more than my beauty when, of an afternoon, outside the walls they astounded your old warriors by hurling darts while kneeling on their horses, which ran so fast that they raised the dust with their bellies. We went out to fight with the Olcades, the Vaccæi, all those Iberian tribes which yesterday you fought and which to-day follow you. Led by you I fought like a soldier, and I considered myself happy when on the long marches, imitating our horses which lovingly put their heads together, you bent toward me, striking your helmet against mine to kiss me. Finally—not even that! What am I? One warrior more in your camp; a friend worthy of gratitude, who brought you assistance on seeing you abandoned by Carthage, with no other force than a handful of veterans and some elephants. In the battles if you see me in danger you fly to defend me; but afterwards, in the camp, on the long marches, a few words of friendship, a cold smile as to any one of your captains. Your heart has closed against me. Am I not Asbyte, she whom you knew in New Carthage? Do you not love me when you see me made ugly and hardened by war? Tell me that, and I will become a woman again, I will bedeck myself with jewels, I will abandon my Amazons and surround myself with Greek slaves, I will cover myself with ointments which will change my skin back to its pristine freshness, and I will follow you on your marches lying on a litter with curtains of purple."

"No!" Hannibal made haste to reply, with enthusiasm. "I love you as you are. The beloved of Hannibal

can only be an Amazon like yourself, who have made many warriors fall beneath your charger."

"Then why do you flee from me? Why do you abandon me, why forget the sweetness of our early love? See that nightingale, at which a moment ago you aimed your arrow! In the midst of an army camp, before a besieged city, it sings and sings, calling to its mate, heedless of the horrors of war, unconscious of the stench of blood which rises from these fields. Let us be like him! Let us make war; but let us also love each other, and let us ride through the battles with our bodies thrilled with love!"

"No, Asbyte," said the African gloomily. "That felicity is impossible; I love you, but we cannot understand each other. You complain because I see in you only an Amazon, when you are a woman; you, in return, see in me only a man, and I am more than man. I am not the demigod you imagine; I am something more; I am a formidable machine of war, without heart or sense of pity, created only to crush men and nations who obstruct my passage."

Hannibal said this with conviction, beating his firm chest, straightening his figure with sombre majesty as he declared his destructive power.

"I would love you if I were a man capable of wasting my time in such sweet folly, but when have you seen the eagle spend all his time in the nest caressing his mate, without desire to soar aloft and fall upon the quarry? Those who have talons cannot caress, and I was born to make prey of the world, or else for the world to crush me. Love? A sweet occupation, I grant you! In the past, full of blood and of battles, the only oases of

my joy were those days in New Carthage when I believed that Tanith herself, with all her divine beauty, had deigned to come down to my arms. But that is over; Hannibal has other loves that attract him and dominate him; he loves his sword, he loves all that the enemy possesses, and he cannot sleep with tranquility for thinking of Rome, whom he desires to crush within these arms! How far away she is!"

The Amazon made a gesture of despair at the passion with which the chieftain declared his ambitions.

"You might complain," continued Hannibal, "if you saw that my thoughts were filled with the image of another woman. Whom have I loved but you? To draw to me those barbarians who follow me, to league them by ties of blood to my enterprises, I took to wife the daughter of an Iberian kinglet. Yes, and where is she? Does she follow me as do you? She remains in New Carthage, spinning her gay-colored wools, and she scarcely thinks of me, because never for a moment did the charms of the barbarian virgin move me. I love only you. Hannibal can fall tremulous with passion only into arms like yours, hardened by use of the lance. But be worthy of him! Think not as do other women; seek not new lovers; unite yourself to me, so that both together we can think of possessing and of hating, of making the world ours!"

As if exalted by his own words, the African, with glowing eyes, approached Asbyte, caressing her arms, while he breathed in her face his ambitious plans.

"I must be lord of the world! I want Carthage, only Carthage, to exist upon the earth, because Carthage is my native land! Had I been born a Roman, Rome

should be mistress! With my name I mean to obliterate the memory of Alexander the Macedonian, to be greater than he, to conquer wider territories, and I dream of undertakings less easy than dominating the Asiatics, weakened by the softening tendency of the sun and of riches. Rome is sturdy, she is stronger than our republic of merchants corroded by avarice and pleasure; her hands are calloused by the plow handle and the lance—then against Rome am I headed! Alexander! How weak is his glory! It is easy to march to the conquest of the world when one is the son of Philip, who leaves as inheritance an army seasoned by a hundred victories, when one has an obedient kingdom at one's back, and even in childhood has the good fortune to receive instruction from Aristotle. The difficult thing is to be Hannibal, abandoned by my country, with no other resources than those I can find for myself; having to face at the same time the fury of the enemy and the treachery and intrigue of my fellow countrymen, reared far from my father, among astute merchants who, keeping me as hostage, sought to avoid future danger by diverting my warlike instincts; with no other culture than a little Greek which Sosilon the Spartan taught me; but despite all this, Hannibal wars with fate, and he is conquering. If Alexander is admired for his conquests in the land of the rising sun, some day the world will be startled at seeing me, after having crushed men, dominating Nature herself by crossing the loftiest glaciers and changing the positions of mountains to continue on my way. Look at me well, Asbyte, and you will be convinced that it is as useless to try to arouse human sentiments in my heart as to soften the breast of the enormous

bronze Moloch which we have in Carthage! A moment ago, in the solitude of my tent, I felt weak and disheartened, but talking with you revives my strength. Look at me well; you are in the presence of one who fears neither men nor gods!"

"The gods!" exclaimed Asbyte with a throb of terror. "Do you not fear that they will punish you?"

A peal of laughter, sarcastic, tinged with deep scorn, answered the Amazon.

"The gods!" exclaimed Hannibal. "I live among warriors of all nations. Each one adores his own gods, and I know so many, so many, that I do not believe in any of them, and I jest at them all. In Carthage I adored Moloch; here you have often seen me dedicate sacrifices to the Iberian divinities, to attract the people to me. If some day I enter as a conqueror that city where my thought continually dwells, the populace shall acclaim me, seeing me climb to the Capitol to offer thanks to their gods. I believe only in force and strategy. I have but one tutelary god—war, who makes giants of men, giving them the omnipotence of divinity. If on becoming lord of the earth, I find no one with whom to fight, I shall die, thinking the world empty!"

The Amazon bowed her head, overcome with sadness.

"I realize now that you will never be mine, Hannibal! You love war above all things else, and will be faithful to it as long as you live. You are indeed a bird of prey; the momentary love of a slave woman satisfies you; the wounded and weeping woman who falls into the power of your soldiers as they enter a city through a breach in its walls satiates you. You will never understand love and its sweetness."

Hannibal shrugged his shoulders scornfully.

"I love victory, success! The laurel which Greek heroes bound upon their brows in the triumph has for me a more penetrating perfume than the roses of the poets. Cease your laments, Asbyte; be a warrior, and forget that you are a woman; I will love you more. You shall be my brother in arms. Why think of those nights of love when I was still in misfortune and lacking in soldiers, now that all Iberia follows me and I see my dreams of world-power beginning to be realized? Look over this camp, where infinite tongues are spoken, and where each tribe dresses in a different costume. They flow in like streams which swell the torrent. Each day new warriors appear. How many are they? No one knows. Maherbal said yesterday that there were a hundred and twenty thousand; I believe that soon there will be a hundred and eighty thousand. Blind faith in Hannibal draws them on; they feel that with me they march to victory; perhaps their gods have told them that this is but the beginning of a series of achievements which will astound the world. Ponder over it, Asbyte! These peoples have spent their lives fighting among themselves; they hated each other, and yet the sword of Hannibal is a shepherd's crook which guides them like a common flock; and after this miracle would you have me waste my time loving you, staying in my tent lying at your feet, my head upon your knees, listening to you while you sing the dreamy songs of the oasis? No! Lightning of Baal! The city stands before us, mocking at the greatest army ever gathered together on the fields of Iberia, and this must stop. The hempen tent must crush the tower of stone. Sharpen well your lance, daughter of Iarbas; prepare your faithful steed, my beloved! That mysterious

breeze which I always perceive on the eve of a victory blows around me. This very day we shall enter Saguntum."

He glanced to the east as if impatient for the coming of dawn.

The moon shone less clearly; the sky darkened, its blue becoming more dense, and on the side toward the sea a broad belt of violet light appeared.

"It will soon be morning," continued the African. "This night, Asbyte, you shall sleep in the ivory couch of some rich Greek woman, and you shall have at your feet the Elders of the city to serve you as slaves."

"No, Hannibal. This day which is now beginning will never end for me. I still see the shade of Iarbas, as it appeared to me before the first cock-crow. I shall die, Hannibal!"

"Die! Can you believe that? Before the enemy reaches you he must pass over Hannibal's body. You are my brother in arms! *I* will be at your side!"

"Even so, I must die. My father cannot deceive me."

"Are you afraid? Are you trembling, daughter of the Garamantan? Ah, at last the woman! Stay in your tent! Do not approach the walls! I will go and seek you when the moment arrives for you to enter the city like a lady!"

Asbyte straightened her graceful figure as if she had just received a lashing. Her large eyes glowed with anger.

"I will leave you, Hannibal. Day is beginning to dawn. Make preparation for the assault, and you will find me ready when your troops give the signal. Knowing that I am going to die, I wish to ask you for one

kiss, the last—No, do not approach me. I do not want it now; it would do me harm. If I fall and you can find me among the slain, you will know what my last thought has been."

Leaning on her lance she moved away between the rows of tents, followed by the black horse, which sniffed at her footprints in faithful devotion.

Day was breaking. The camp fires were nearly extinguished, and around the dying embers the men could be seen arising from the ground, stretching their benumbed limbs, and shaking out the pieces of cloth in which they had been wrapped. Horses whinnied, tugging at their stake ropes, and the soldiers set them free, driving them to the river to water and clean them.

Along every road huge carts were approaching the camp laden with provisions and forage, and the creaking of their axles mingled with the songs of the soldiers, who had arisen in good spirits and recalled their distant homes, singing in their native tongues.

It was a confusion of voices and cries. Each tribe camped by itself; one people greeted the other with joyous shouts. From every side floated odors of naked, sweaty flesh, and of strange stews boiling in the pots; the hammers of the carpenters echoed loudly as they worked upon the siege-engines which would soon be hurling stones and darts against the walls. Warriors in flowing mantles, mounted on prancing steeds, galloped between the city and the camp, examining the battlements of Saguntum, reddened by the sun's first rays, where the defenders were beginning to stir among the merlons. Hannibal with uncovered head was sitting on a remnant of a wall, the ruin of a villa demolished by the besiegers, also studying the city.

He was resolved to begin the attack as soon as his army had finished making the morning preparations. Fifteen hundred Africans, armed with pickaxes, were gathering on the outskirts of the camp. They were going to attack that portion of the city which threw its ramparts into the level, open plain, thereby permitting unobstructed approach to its base. In other divisions of the camp the Celtiberian infantry was forming with long ladders to attempt the walls on many sides at once. The engines of war advanced, the catapults, with the thick bow tightly drawn by elastic cords, ready to fling the stone deposited in the groove of the long arm; the battering-rams vibrating on their chains as they moved. The walking-towers, light, with walls of interlaced osiers, trundled upon massive disks crowned by the shields of the besiegers who concealed themselves behind them to hurl their missiles.

Hannibal hurried to his tent, passing between the cavalrymen who were deliberately grooming their horses and polishing their weapons, knowing that they were not to take part in the assault until the last moment. The chieftain armed himself lightly. He put on a short lorica of bronze scales, adjusted his helmet, selected a shield, and on leaving his tent he met Maherbal and his brother Mago, in charge of the reserves who remained in the camp.

"Your legs are unprotected," said his brother. "Are you not going to cover them with greaves?"

"No," replied the chieftain spiritedly. "We are going to make an assault, and to climb over the fallen walls one must have his legs free. The missiles will respect me as ever."

As he walked out of the camp he thought he saw the queen of the Amazons standing between two tents, following him with saddened eyes; but Asbyte, when her gaze met Hannibal's, moved away and turned her back upon him haughtily.

Trumpets blew, and the army stirred, marching against the city.

The mantelets rolled forward, veritable parapets of wood, through the interstices of which the bowmen shot. Under cover of these portable bulwarks the Africans armed with pickaxes advanced, while in other directions throughout the valley hurried the Celtiberians, carrying their ladders in front of them.

In an instant the walls were manned with defenders. Over the merlons appeared sinewy arms hurling missiles, slings swirled discharging stones, and bows bent followed by sharp hisses.

Hannibal, to animate the assailants, marched behind the fifteen hundred Africans, laughing at the projectiles which struck the wooden sides of the mantelets. Several nights, dragging himself on his belly, and at the risk of being taken prisoner, he had reached the foot of that rampart which projected on the valley side, and which formed the strongest wall of the city. The base was composed of great stones laid in clay. The chieftain being convinced that it was difficult to scale the walls, decided to open a breach through the foundation by undermining the reddish rampart before which his army had been confounded.

As they drew near it the Africans abandoned the shelter of the mantelets and hurled themselves furiously against the barrier of enormous stones. Naked, black,

shouting, raising and lowering their muscular arms which ended in glittering iron-pointed pickaxes, they looked like infernal spirits sent by the Cabiric gods of Carthage for the destruction of the city. Stubborn and tenacious in their work of destruction, they growled and picked, insensible to the blows which fell from above.

The beleaguered people, infuriated by this audacity, scorned the Balearic slingers and archers who from a distance aimed over the merlons, and stepping into the crenels they cast down missiles and stones which, falling vertically, never failed to claim their victims. The Africans tumbled over with broken heads or crushed backs; arms and legs snapped like reeds beneath the weight of the stones, and more than one assailant was pinned to the ground by a dart which passed through his back. Over the palpitating bodies, the mangled flesh, the blood mixed with the clay from the walls, rushed fresh assailants, grasping the pickaxes from the hands of the dying, and taking up the work of destruction, pounding on the wall, beating it furiously as if it were an enemy standing before them. Africans, Celtiberians, Gauls, men of all colors and races crowded together, each cursing in his own language, frothing at the mouth with fury, with death hovering above them every instant, and surrounded by a din of howls and lamentations. Tormented by falling stones and blazing phalarics which set fire to their clothing and clung to their naked flesh, roasting them until they writhed in agony, they rushed to the river like animated torches.

Now a block in the wall was giving way! Now it rolled out of place! The most important thing was to

remove the first; after it the others would follow. The besiegers burst into exclamations of savage joy; they heard Hannibal's voice encouraging them; but before raising their heads to rest a moment, a deafening howl arose among them. It was raining, but raining fiery, infernal drops which penetrated the bodies of of the men like interminable knives. Up there on the walls a fire was smoking. The merchants were melting the great ingots of silver from their vaults, pouring the molten metal like a rain of death upon those who dared destroy the city walls.

The assailants fell back, roaring with fury, and sought refuge behind the mantelets. Hannibal raised his sword, striving with his blows to force them back to work, but in vain he exhorted them, haranguing of victory and of the necessity of destroying the wall; his soldiers retreated without turning their backs, looking with respect at the chieftain who seemed invulnerable, but complaining of the atrocious torment of the burns. Some wallowed on the ground kicking with pain, their lips covered with foam.

Suddenly it seemed as if the city had burst, hurling its inhabitants forth in all directions. In the distance the Celtiberians were seen to flee, flinging away their ladders. The populace rushed out en masse against the besiegers. The gates were too narrow to allow passage to the armed multitude which swirled through them and then spread out in all directions like a torrent which, having run boxed in between mountains, suddenly inundates the plain. Many impatient ones swung from the merlons to fall more quickly upon the enemy.

In a moment the whole space intervening between the

walls and the camp was covered by attacking Saguntines and by fleeing besiegers. Hannibal felt himself dragged by the flight of his soldiers. The mantelets began to burn, and a crowd of women and boys, grasping torches, encircled the walking-towers, setting fire to their osier walls.

The Saguntines, forming in phalanxes, advanced, sweeping before them the besiegers who fled in disorder. Before its movable front of pikes and of arms flourishing broadswords, nothing could be seen but fugitive men who flung away their arms and leaped into the air pierced by arrows and lances.

The giant Theron came out in solitary majesty, as if he alone were a phalanx. The lion skin, and his enormous stature, attracted the gaze of all. His club rose and fell, crashing into the groups of fugitives and opening great swaths through their ranks.

"It is Hercules!" the besiegers shouted, with superstitious terror. "The god of Saguntum has come out against us!"

The presence of the giant accelerated the dispersion even more than the blows of the Saguntines.

Hannibal tried to advance, to face about; in vain he lifted up his voice, brandishing his sword. He was swept by the torrent of flight; his own soldiers crowded him along, blinded by the contagion of terror; they tramped on his heels, they pressed against his back with their heads bent low in swift retreat, and he had to make strenuous efforts to keep from being overwhelmed and trampled down. A moment more and the Saguntines, having destroyed every engine of war, reached the camp.

The chieftain was snarling curses and threats against his brother and Maherbal who did not come up with the reserves to stay the torrent of the rout. He saw the troops issuing from the camp hurriedly, but on foot and in disorder, with the precipitation produced by an unexpected event. Many of them were adjusting the straps of their cuirasses, and the different tribes were jostled together and minus their leaders, who in vain had trumpeters blow their horns to bring the hosts to order.

The Saguntines in the blind impulse of victory clashed with this reinforcement and almost routed it in the first encounter. Hannibal, who had managed to reunite a group of the bravest soldiers, presented a firm front to the Saguntines.

"This way! This way!" he shouted to those coming from the camp, who in their excitement did not know where to rally.

But at the same time his cries attracted the enemy. Theron, as if guided by his god, turned toward Hannibal, and soon his mace began to hammer at the shields of the Carthaginians. He hurled himself against them with cool courage, breaking their lances with a blow of his club, wounding himself on the swords which seemed to rebound from his powerful muscles, dripping blood beneath his lion skin, ferocious and magnificent, like unto a divinity. He never raised his knotty trunk without dropping an enemy at his feet.

The besiegers began to recede again before the pressure of the Saguntines; Hannibal was once more dragged by his men who were terrified by the savagery of the giant who seemed invulnerable, when an unexpected turn gave a new phase to the combat. The earth shook

beneath a wild gallop, like the reverberation of rolling thunder, and leaning over their horses' necks, their hair floating from beneath their helmets, and their white tunics streaming around their naked limbs, Asbyte's Amazons fell upon the enemy with the violence of a hurricane. They came whooping, waving their lances, calling one to another to charge upon the denser groups, and the assailants fell back astonished at these women whom they saw near at hand for the first time, and who were now favored by the effect of surprise.

Looking between the heads which surrounded him, Hannibal saw Asbyte pass like a luminous flash, absolutely alone. The light of the sun, striking upon her helmet, encircled her with a nimbus of gold. Her lover's instinct had revealed to her where Hannibal stood surrounded by enemies, and she dashed to his support.

Succeeding events were rapid, instantaneous. Through the dust of the charge Hannibal barely made out what occurred, as if it were the fleeting agony of a dream.

The Amazon, with couched lance, rode at a gallop against the priest of Hercules, who in the recoil of that disordered hand to hand struggle had been left alone in a broad open space.

"Ohooo!——" shouted the Amazon, exciting her horse by her war cry.

Pressing her legs against the animal's ribs she lifted herself upon his back in order to give the giant a deeper wound.

The horse, terrified at the frightful lion's head on the forehead of the colossus, reared and whinnied, while at the same moment the enormous mace struck above his eyes with a crash like the breaking of a heavy amphora.

The horse reeled backwards with a shattered skull, blood spurting from his eyes. The Amazon, thrown from his back, fell on her knees a few steps away, covering herself with her shield. If she could hold out a moment she would be saved. Hannibal, forgotten by his disorganized men who were milling like a frightened herd in the confusion of battle, ran to her aid. Bodies of cavalry rushed from the camp to assist the audacious Amazons, and the mass of the besieged retreated in disorder toward the city.

Asbyte arose and advanced a step, raising her lance to thrust the giant; but at the same moment the enormous cudgel, brandished with both hands, crushed upon her like a toppling wall. Her crumpling bronze shield rung plaintively, her golden helmet parted on the seams, and Asbyte doubled up on the ground, her tunic stained with blood, like a wounded white bird folded in its fluttering wings.

Theron, despite his ferocity, stood appalled, resting on his club, oblivious to what was taking place about him, as if repentant for the frightful destruction which his power had wrought upon that beautiful woman.

"Answer *me* for that, Theron! Defend yourself, butcher of Hercules! Kill me if you can; I am Hannibal!"

The priest turned and beheld a warrior, his face covered by his shield, his sword held in tierce, advancing with amazing agility, circling around him like a tiger attacking an elephant and seeking by his greater mobility to spring upon him at a defenceless point. The battle had ceased; the Saguntines fell back toward the city. The besieging cavalry charged close up to the

walls, leaving the two combatants alone on the field. A few soldiers sluggishly approached, and stood still some distance away, intimidated by the superstitious terror which the giant inspired.

Theron did not falter on finding himself alone. Hannibal! It was Hannibal the great warrior, who was now to fight with him absolutely alone! This singular duel, in view of the whole city looking on from the walls, seemed arranged by his god! He was to rid Saguntum of her direst enemy! Hercules had reserved this glory for him; and smiling with satisfaction he raised the mace, striding straight toward the African.

Hannibal eluded him, stepping backward, springing aside with feline agility, evading the encounter, until at last the priest was weary and wished to end the struggle before new combatants should arrive. He steadied himself on his colossal legs and hurled the club at Hannibal. The enormous tree trunk tore through the air, while Hannibal, seeing it coming, sprang aside. It grazed his shield with a thundering clang, and fell far away amid a cloud of dust.

The African bent his knees at the shock, but recovered himself, and flinging away his broken shield rushed at Theron with lifted sword.

The priest of Hercules, finding himself disarmed, experienced a momentary qualm; he knew fear, believing himself in the presence of a superior being against whom his strength could not avail, and turning his back on Hannibal he fled toward Saguntum. The people on the walls seeing his peril called to him. Some drew their bows to stop Hannibal with their arrows, but they dared not shoot for fear of wounding Theron.

The Saguntines breathed hard at seeing their Hercules flee, pursued by the warrior who was heading him off so that he should not reach the city.

The giant being heavy and muscular, ran with difficulty over the ground strewn as it was with dead and with the litter of the fight. He stumbled over a shield; his knees bent; he arose again; but this time completely nude. The lion skin had fallen from his shoulders, and lay among the wrack of battle.

His pursuer caught up to him. The giant felt the cold steel sink into the muscles of his back, and not caring to die like a fleeing slave in sight of his entire city he turned quickly, extending his columnar arms to crush his enemy between them; but before the two muscular masses could encircle and mangle him, Hannibal had buried his sword again and again in the side of the colossus, and Theron fell, pressing his hands against his wounds and gazing at his dark red blood.

He looked at Hannibal without anger, with a child-like expression of pain, and then he fixed his death-clouded eyes on the lofty Acropolis, where the roofs glistened in the sun.

"Father Hercules!" he murmured bitterly. "Why do you abandon your people?"

His enormous head raised a cloud of dust as it struck the ground. Hannibal bent over it and with his sword began to hew the robust neck, obliged to strike many blows to sever the network of corded tendons and stubborn muscles, which seemed to blunt the edge of the blade.

A cloud of arrows began to plow the ground round-about Hannibal.

The chieftain removed his helmet, loosing his mass of curling hair; he grasped the head of Theron by its gory mane, and placing one foot in the attitude of conqueror upon the body of the priest, he showed it to the people on the walls.

He was magnificent with his sword in his right hand and holding out his other arm which sustained the head of the giant. The dark integument of his eyes, brilliant as the metal disks which hung from his ears, gleamed with pride and icy hate.

The Saguntines recognized the victor, and wails of surprise and peals of fury thundered along the wall.

"Hannibal! It is Hannibal!"

He still stood motionless, like a statue of victory, proudly defying the enemy, heedless of the storm of projectiles whizzing around him, until suddenly he dropped the head of Theron and sank to his knees, letting fall his sword.

Mopsus the bowman had shot an arrow through his leg.

From the walls all beheld how, in an outburst of angry pain he tore out the arrow-shaft, broke it into splinters, and flung them away. Then they saw no more. A host of the besieging army rushed forward and covered him, and his archers and slingers began to shoot against the battlements.

Actæon, fatigued by the recent sally, and hidden behind a merlon, watched what was taking place around Hannibal, paying no attention to the missiles from the slingers, who, infuriated by the wounding of their chief, hurled a hail of stones against the walls.

He saw Hannibal move away supported by two Carthaginian captains in golden cuirasses, accompanied by a multitude.

Suddenly the chieftain repelled his helpers, and limped painfully toward a white, bloodstained object lying on the red earth like a shapeless rag. He bent over the form, and the Numidians who surrounded it beheld the terrible Hannibal weep—for the first and last time—pressing his lips upon the mangled head of the Amazon Asbyte.

CHAPTER VII

THE WALLS OF SAGUNTUM

The wounding of Hannibal gave the city some days of respite. The besiegers remained non-combatant in their camp, watching Saguntum from afar. The slingers came out in the mornings to exercise their arms by shooting against the wall, but aside from this, and from the arrow-shots with which they replied from the city, there was no further exchange of hostilities between the besiegers and the besieged.

Bands of cavalry overran the domain foraging, and the immense multitude of ferocious tribes finished the work of destruction, sacking the villas and country-houses. The groves were cleared away; each day they chopped down new trees in order to supply the camp with wood, and in these denuded spaces the tiled roofs and towers could no longer be seen. Only smoking and blackened ruins appeared here and there through the deserted fields. A mosaic on a level with the ground was often the only vestige of an elegant villa razed to its foundations by the invaders.

The beleaguered people saw Hannibal's army rapidly swelling. Each day new tribes arrived. It seemed as if all Iberia, subjugated by the prestige of Hannibal, were coming to camp around Saguntum, fired by the fame of its riches. They came on foot or on horseback, dirty,

savage, covered with skins or dressed in esparto, carrying crescent-shaped shields and short two-edged swords, eager to fight, and bringing with them showy presents for the African, whose glory dazzled them.

Such of the Saguntines as had trafficked with the tribes of the interior recognized the new arrivals from the walls. They came from very far; some there were who had marched more than a month to reach Saguntum, and they pointed out the Lusitanians, athletic of figure, of whom horrible tales of ferocity were told; the Galicians, who lived on fish and by washing and melting the gold of their rivers; the Asturians, who worked in iron; and the gloomy Basques whose language other nations could not understand. Mixed with them came fresh tribes from Bætica, who had been slow in answering the Carthaginian's call; agile infantry, of olive skin, their hair hanging down their backs, dressed in short white skirts with broad purple borders, and carrying large round shields which served them as floats in crossing streams. The camp stretched along the river and spread over the extensive valley, scattering finally in groups of tents and huts as far as the eye could see. It was a veritable city, larger than Saguntum, which advanced and advanced as if it would swallow her walls.

The day following their courageous sally the Saguntines noticed great activity in the besieging camp—the funeral honors to the queen of the Amazons. They saw Asbyte's body borne in parade on a shield by the women-warriors; then, in the centre of the camp rose a column of smoke from the enormous pyre which consumed her remains.

The beleaguered people guessed the mood of the enemy.

Hannibal was lying on his couch, and the army seemed depressed by the hero's suffering. The wizards came and went through the tent, examining the wound, and then they searched the surrounding mountains for mysterious herbs to compound miraculous poultices.

In Saguntum some of the most daring urged another sally to take advantage of that moment of depression for falling upon the enemy and putting them to flight. But the besieging camp was well guarded; Hannibal's brother with the principal captains were on the watch to avoid a surprise; the army lay behind earthen breastworks thrown up around the camp as in a strong city, and they took advantage of this opportunity to accomplish new work for protecting it from the danger of attack. On the other hand the city was no less disheartened by the loss of the priest of Hercules. The people could not explain to themselves how the African chieftain had put the gigantic Theron to death before the eyes of all Saguntum, and the more superstitious saw in this a celestial sign, the omen that the tutelary gods of the city were about to abandon it.

The same determination as at the beginning was still displayed; all were resolved to defend themselves; but the mocking joviality of the early days of the siege had disappeared. They believed that they scented adversity round about them, and the ever swelling numbers of the enemy dispirited them. Each morning they beheld the besieging camp increased. When would Hannibal's allies cease to come?

The merry Grecian city of rich merchants and of pompous Panathenaic festivals presented the solemn aspect of every beleaguered town. The people from the

fields who had sought refuge in the city camped in the streets and squares, distilling the odor of a sick and suffering flock. In the temples the wounded dragged themselves to the bases of the columns, groaning; above, on the Acropolis, a funeral pyre smoked day and night consuming the bodies of those who had died on the walls, or had fallen in the streets victims of strange diseases engendered by the congestion of the population.

There were still enough provisions, but there was lack of fruits and vegetables; and the rich, divining the future, gathered in all they could, seeing days of want ahead.

In the poor wards they killed the horses and beasts of burden, roasting the meat over flames kindled in the streets for the roofless refugees.

On the walls, as well as on the Acropolis, all gazed impatiently out to sea. When would the auxiliaries come from Rome? What were the legates from Saguntum to the great Republic doing?

Frequently impatience caused the whole city to be cruelly deceived. Some mornings the lookouts posted in the tower of Hercules on the Acropolis raised a furious clangor of cymbals on spying sails upon the horizon. The people rushed to the crest of the hill, following with anxious eyes the course of the white or red sails over the blue surface of the Sucronian gulf. It was they! The Romans! The advance ships of the succoring fleet bound for the port! But after hours of anguishing expectancy, their hopes were crushed on seeing that they were passing merchant ships from Massilia or Emporion, or hostile triremes which Hasdrubal, the brother of Hannibal, was sending from New Carthage with provisions for the army.

Each disappointment increased the melancholy of the Saguntines. The enemy's ranks were ever swelling, and the allies failed to come! The city would be lost! The enthusiasm of the defenders was revived only when they found old Mopsus on the walls, who because of his sure aim at Hannibal was the hero of the city, and the valorous Actæon, who with the light spirits of an Athenian, jesting and merry in the presence of danger, knew how to inspire fresh courage.

Sónnica also appeared among them at the points of combat. She ran along the walls amidst the hissing arrows, and the poor citizens marveled at the bravery of the opulent Greek woman who scorned the missiles of the enemy.

Love for Actæon and hatred of the besiegers made her bold. She was enraged at the Carthaginians. From the height of the Acropolis one afternoon she had seen the flames pouring from the roof of her villa. She saw the red tower of the dovecote topple, the beautiful groves which surrounded her house cut down, leaving nothing but a mound of rubbish and charred trunks; and she longed to be avenged, not for her lost riches, but for the destruction of the secluded retreat sacred to her love, and of the sumptuous dwelling crowded with memories. Moreover, she was nervous from the insufferable deprivation of this new life within the beleaguered city, where she was obliged to eat coarse food and to sleep in a room in her warehouse among the valuables piled together in the disorder of flight, almost mingling with her slaves, and deprived of her bath. There was no water in the city, except that in the cisterns which the

magistrates distributed with great parsimony, foreseeing an approaching scarcity.

This wretched life excited her, making her distinguished for warlike audacity. Occasionally she saw her lover, the soul of the defense; sometimes on the walls directing the slaves who were repairing them, at others on the Acropolis with Mopsus to examine the situation of the enemy. He wished to take advantage of the lull caused by Hannibal's wound to put the city into a better state of defense, and meanwhile Sónnica strolled along the wall talking with the young men, promising handsome rewards to those who most distinguished themselves, and exciting them to make an extraordinary sally in which the city should hurl itself en masse beyond the walls, crushing the enemy and sweeping them onward into the sea.

She went everywhere escorted by Erotion and Rhanto. Life in the narrow limits, and a community of danger, had drawn her to the two children, and they followed in her wake listening to her words with enthusiastic smiles, and applauding the rich woman's warlike suggestions.

Rhanto was no longer a shepherdess. One after another her goats had been devoured in Sónnica's house, and with no other occupation than following her mistress, clinging always to Erotion's hand, she regarded the situation as one of joy, and had no desire that it should ever cease. Even the frowning Mopsus, the father of her beloved, unprotesting found them together, and often smiled at seeing them tranquil and happy, walking along the walls without fear of the besiegers.

Danger had developed kindness in the people. Rich merchants elbowed slaves as they shot their arrows from

the cover of the merlons; more than one opulent Grecian woman was seen to tear her linen tunic to bind the wounds of rude mercenaries, and Sónnica the rich, she who used to scorn the women of the city, now talked of forming a troop like that of the Amazons who followed Hannibal. Rhanto, content with this new situation, so blinded by joy that she could not see the anguish and misery which the town endured, pulled her lover away in moments of combat, snatched the bow from his hands, and dragging him from the battlements, they hid beneath the hollow of a stairway at the foot of the rampart, and made love with fresh ardor, their pleasure seeming the more intense because threatened by the singing arrows and the cries and exclamations of pain and fury overhead.

The respite lasted only twenty days. Breaking the silence of the camp the carpenters' hammers rung ceaselessly and the besieged saw gradually rising a great wooden tower several stories high, taller than the walls of the city.

Hannibal regained his strength, and was eager to continue the siege. In his desire that the enemy should see him without delay, he left his tent, in spite of his still open wound, he mounted his horse, and rode out of the camp to gallop along the walls, followed by his captains.

The Saguntines were dazed at the sight of him. He shone like a coal of fire upon his black horse; the sun wrapped him in a splendor which blinded, as if he were a divinity. He wore the cuirass and helmet made of gold from the rivers which the Galician tribes had brought him as a present. The chieftain preferred the bronze

armor which he had ever worn in his battles, but his parade around Saguntum was like a resurrection, and he wished the besieged to behold him dazzling and majestic as a god.

With the reappearance of Hannibal the siege began fiercer than before. The Saguntines understood from the first moment that the besiegers had taken advantage of the cessation of hostilities to augment their offensive power. With great effort they dragged up the enormous wooden tower which they had constructed. Archers were stationed in the different stories to shoot through the loopholes in the sides. The upper platform dominated the wall in such wise that its catapult hurled great stones over the merlons, sowing death among the defenders.

Hannibal seemed everywhere at once, irritated by the tenacity of the Saguntines, and eager to terminate the siege without delay.

It was impossible to remain uncovered on the walls. The tower had been placed near the projecting part of the city which Hannibal considered the weakest. Darts and stones fell ceaselessly and while the defenders sought refuge behind the merlons, unable to step out into the crenels, the battering-rams pounded at the base under the protection of the tower, hammering against the walls, and gradually weakening them; and the Africans who had outlived the first assault now attacked the blocks of stone with more security, little by little opening a breach.

The Saguntines, pale with the rage of impotence, endeavored in vain to stay the destruction. The besieging tower, rolling over a level tract impelled by men hidden behind it, moved from place to place, scattering death,

and at times it drew so near that the besieged could hear the voices of the bowmen who shot through the loopholes. Meanwhile, down below, at the base of the walls, the slow and obstinate work of undermining continued.

The more excitable citizens, raging with indignation at seeing their walls destroyed with impunity, leaned out into the crenels to shoot at those who operated the battering-ram and worked with pickaxes; but no sooner did they appear than a stone fell upon them, or they tumbled over with their bodies pierced by an arrow. The wall was strewn with the dead and dying. The wounded dragged themselves along contemplating with clouded gaze the shaft of the arrow sunk in their flesh.

In vain the besieged shot against the tower. Stones rebounded from its walls of logs with hollow clatter but without piercing them. It was bristling with arrows, moving like a monstrous elephant, insensible to wounds, and in vain the phalarics whistled through the air with their trail of sparks and smoke, for they could not set fire to the wet hides with which the upper part of the tower was covered.

The more prudent fled from those places where the besiegers concentrated their efforts, and the more audacious took their places ignorant how to repel the enemy, but with the stubborn determination of dying before he should advance a step.

Mopsus, the bowman, was the only one in the difficult situation who inflicted damage upon the Carthaginians. With drawn bow he thrust his head outside the merlons for an instant and shot, managing to send his arrows into the loopholes of the tower, scattering death among the soldiers who thought themselves secure. Erotion was at

his side. Seeing his father in a place of danger he repelled Rhanto at the foot of the steps leading to the wall, paying no heed to her tears, and grasping his bow he tried to imitate the old archer, challenging the men in the tower.

But with the imprudence of youth he exposed almost his entire body beyond the merlon, and when he managed to plunge an arrow into the tower he laughed, standing in the open crenel insulting the besiegers with his boisterous peals of boyish laughter.

A stone from a catapult in the tower came whizzing and struck his head with a mournful crash. Blood and torn flesh spattered over those nearest him, and the boy, doubling up as if made of rags, rolled through the crenel and fell outside the wall. The arrows from his quiver struck roundabout his body with a metallic ring.

"Mopsus! Mopsus!" shouted Actæon, striving to restrain the bowman.

The old man had rushed out upon the wall, wholly unprotected, his eyes glassy, his gray beard quivering, impotent from grief and rage.

Three times he tried to draw his bow to shoot at the platform in the tower which held the catapult, but in spite of his efforts he could not bend his weapon. Grief, surprise, despair, at being unable to exterminate his enemies with a single blow deprived him of his strength.

While he stood struggling with the rigid bow which seemed to rebel against him, the enemy's projectiles were hissing around his head. Finding himself powerless, aged in an instant by grief, gazing down upon the mangled body of his son, and unable to avenge him, he uttered a moan, and summoning all the strength of his will he

sprang outside the wall, and fell upon the corpse of Erotion. His head struck against the stones with a resounding thud, a stream of blood ran from it, and father and son formed a motionless pile a short distance from the assailants, who continued pounding with the battering-rams, and digging at the base of the wall.

The unequal struggle lasted almost throughout the day. The Saguntines defending this part of the wall could not repulse the advance of the enemy. They felt the dull thud of the pickaxes, the wall seemed to reel beneath their feet, and they could do nothing to prevent the progress of the besiegers.

Slowly the defenders began to retire. Actæon, saddened by the tragic death of his compatriot, and convinced that it was useless to remain at that point, advised them to retreat into the interior of the city. He fell back with some of his men, and soon a tower, eaten away at its base by the battering-ram, tottered and fell to the ground with a great roar of rubbish, and filled the air with dust. After this two other towers were battered down, and a long stretch of wall collapsed, burying in the débris the most obstinate defenders who had remained at their posts until the last moment.

An awe-inspiring acclamation, a howl of savage joy from without greeted the overthrow of the walls. From the city streets the desolated fields and one end of the camp could be seen through the open breach. Arms glittered in the dense atmosphere, reddened by the dust of the shattered walls; dark bodies of troops could be seen advancing, and trumpet blasts resounded.

"The assault! The Carthaginians are coming!"

From all sides of the city armed men gathered. The narrow streets near the wall vomited groups and more groups who came shouting and brandishing swords and axes, with the determined mien of those who had decided to die. Clambering over the rubbish they began to take position in the breach, and this open space, this broad gash in the city's girdle of stone, was protected by a motley crowd which flourished weapons and formed a solid unbreakable mass.

Actæon was in the first rank; near him he saw the prudent Alcon, who had exchanged his staff for a sword, and many of the peace-loving merchants whose astute faces seemed ennobled by the heroic resolution to die rather than give passage to the enemy.

When the besiegers advanced to the assault they had to clash with the entire city. The walking-tower, the battering-rams, and the catapults, availed them nothing; the struggle was hand to hand, and the besieged no longer used the phalaric, but the sword and the axe.

Hannibal, on foot, guided the phalanxes, which marched with lowered lance or lifted sword. He was fighting like a soldier, anxious to end this siege which was delaying his plans, believing this to be the decisive moment, and that a supreme effort might make him master of the city. With sharp words he encouraged the soldiers in the different idioms of their tribes, reminding them of the great riches within the city, of the beauty of the Greek women, of the large numbers of slaves inside those walls, and the Balearians attacked with lowered head, holding before them their wooden spears with points hardened by fire; the Celtiberians roared their war songs, beating on their breasts as on sonorous drums,

drawing their sharp two-edged swords, and the Numidians and Mauritanians, dismounting from their horses, moved from place to place, cautious and sly, hurling upon the besieged the missiles which they carried in their girdles hidden beneath their white vestments.

All in vain. The breach was a narrow throat. The Carthaginian army, in spite of superior numbers, had to contract its front to fight in such a constricted space, and in this equalizing of forces, the Saguntines retained an advantage, repelling the besiegers as often as they tried to climb over the mound formed by the fallen wall. Swords sunk into flesh producing atrocious wounds characteristic of ancient warfare; breasts were torn open by the brutal force of lances; combatants clinched entwining their arms like tendrils, linking their legs, making their panting chests wheeze like bellows, and rolling on the ground biting each other in the face. Often when the victor arose he proudly displayed a piece of bleeding flesh between his teeth.

Hannibal's troops rushed up the mound like a hurricane, and on its approach the mass of defenders swayed, but none fell back; they must die firm at their post, for behind them was a compact multitude which forced them to be valiant, leaving no space for retreat.

Thus the battle raged for hours. The mounds of dead between besieged and besieger made the advance difficult. The sun had sunk low in the west, and Hannibal was exasperated by the stubborn resistance which mocked his efforts. Still trusting in his lucky star he ordered the trumpets sounded for the final assault; but at that instant an unheard of thing occurred which disconcerted the chieftain and sowed confusion among his troops.

Actæon did not know for a certainty whence came the voice. Perhaps it was an hallucination produced by faith; perhaps the invention of some enthusiast tired of being on the defensive.

"The Romans!" shouted a voice. "Our allies are coming!"

The news spread with the credulity born of danger. From one to another the story ran that the lookouts in the tower of Hercules had sighted a fleet bound for the port, and none asked who had brought the inspiring news to the breach in the walls. Everyone accepted it, adding by their own invention fresh details, and eyes shone with joy, blanched faces flushed, and even the wounded, dragging themselves over the rubbish heap, waved their arms exclaiming:

"The Romans! The Romans are coming!"

Suddenly, without command, by common instinct, as if impelled by an invisible force, they flung themselves through the breach, down the incline, falling like an avalanche upon the besiegers who were massed for the final assault.

The unexpectedness of the shock, the force of the surprise, the cry of "The Romans! The Romans!" which the Saguntines raised with such conviction, wrought disruption among Hannibal's barbarian tribes. They defended themselves, but the whole city fell upon them; even the women and children fought as on that morning when Theron died, and Hannibal's soldiers, broken into scattered groups, neither seeing nor hearing their chiefs, fled precipitately toward their camp.

Hannibal ran bellowing with rage, maddened at seeing that the besieged repelled his troops for the second

time. Such was the blindness of his anger that he rushed in among the enemy, and several times came near falling beneath their blows.

The day was almost ended. The Saguntine soldiers reached the vicinity of the camp, while the unarmored citizens scattering throughout the battle field dispatched the wounded and tried to set fire to the besieging engines. They would have destroyed them all had it not been for Maherbal, Hannibal's lieutenant, who came out of the camp with some cohorts of cavalry. The besieged, unable to resist the cavalry on open ground, began slowly to retire. When night closed in they re-occupied the breach, commenting with joyful shouts upon the victory which mitigated their disappointment over the non-appearance of the Romans.

Actæon, with those Saguntines who had most distinguished themselves in the battles, set to work fortifying the city. He explained to the old men of the Senate how difficult it would be long to defend the opening. It was impossible to repeat the prodigy of that afternoon many times; and by the light of torches the people spent the whole night working behind the breach, throwing down tiled roofs and demolishing walls.

Merchants and slaves, rich city dames and women from the suburbs, all mingled together, wielding pick-axes, rolling stones and carrying baskets of clay. Even the Ancients of the Senate took part in this titanic work, which lasted throughout the night and a great part of the following day.

Euphobias the philosopher, who remained idle in spite of the insults of those who worked, ironically recalled the memory of the primitive founders of the city,

the Cyclopes who moved stones as big as mountains and had thrown up the base of the Acropolis.

The labor was not finished until the next afternoon, and at the same moment the besieging army began to stir. It marched solidly to the assault, silently, sullenly, revealing the fixed determination of taking possession at the first onset of that breach which had put them to shame the day before.

They passed through the clouds of stones and arrows which the besieged hurled at them, and the cohorts leading on a run climbed up the pile of débris, struggling with the more audacious Saguntines, who still disputed passage through the breach. After a short conflict the besiegers made themselves masters of the entrance to the city, and they burst into exclamations of triumph.

Hannibal marched intrepidly at the head of his soldiers; but on gaining the crest of the pile in the breach he stepped backward with an expression of disgust.

Before him stretched a broad waste of demolished houses, and beyond the hills of débris rose a second monstrous wall, constructed in haste, as if an enormous broom had swept the desolated structures of the interior to the entrance of the city. Great, square-hewn stones, chunks of masonry, broken columns, were laid with the regularity of blocks in a wall, and the interstices were chinked with fresh clay. This wall quickly raised by a supreme effort of the whole city was taller than the previous one, and in the form of a curve it joined with the two curtains of the ancient walls which were still standing.

Hannibal paled with wrath on seeing that all his efforts had served only to make him master of a pitiful

little piece of ground covered by heaps of ruins and that by prodigious skill the walls which he had battered down had risen again beyond in a single night. Saguntum would destroy her houses to refortify herself with new barriers, cutting off his passage! He would have to conquer the ground inch by inch, street by street, and it might cost him months and years to narrow it down, first around the Forum, then up to the hill of the Acropolis, before he could succeed in making it surrender.

On the summit of their new wall the Saguntines showed themselves as resolute as the day before, and their bows and slings prevented the assault of the enemy, who ended by falling back, remaining under cover of the débris at the breach.

Hannibal stood outside the city wall, contemplating the heights of the Acropolis. He realized that he might gradually sacrifice his whole army if he continued attacking Saguntum on the level and weaker side where the besieged defended the ground so tenaciously. Calling Maherbal and his brother Mago, he laid before them the necessity of capturing a position on the hill, and of assaulting a portion of the immense Acropolis to attack the city from that direction, obliging it to surrender.

Several days went by without resumption of hostilities on the side toward the river. The engines of war had been moved over to the foot of the hill, and they directed their heavy projectiles against the farthest walls of the Acropolis. These were old and had not been repaired, since the Saguntines trusted in the impregnability of the steeps.

Moreover the number of defenders was insufficient to garrison the extensive precincts of Saguntum, while the

besieger had at his disposal an immense armed multitude which could hurl itself against several places at once.

One night in the Forum, Actæon encountered Sónnica, who was seeking him, followed by Alcon the Prudent.

"The Elders have need of you," said the beautiful Greek woman, with a tone of sadness. "Behold Alcon, who wishes to speak with you."

"Listen, Athenian," said the Saguntine gravely. "The days are passing and our needed succor does not come from Rome. Is it because our legates have been unable to reach the territory of the allied nation, and that the Senate of the great Republic is ignorant of our situation? Is it because Rome imagines that Hannibal, repenting of his audacity, has raised the siege? We need to know what our ally thinks concerning us. We wish the Senate of Rome to know in detail what Saguntum is doing, and the Ancients, at my suggestion, have thought of you."

"Of me? And what do they wish?" asked Actæon in surprise, looking at the mournful Sónnica.

"They wish you to start for Rome this very night. Here is gold! Take also these tablets which will serve as credentials, so that the Senate shall recognize you as an embassador extraordinary from Saguntum. We are not sending you to a festival. The exit is difficult, and it will be even more difficult to find, on these enemy-infested shores, anyone to convey you to Rome. You should start to-night; this moment, if possible; letting yourself down from the walls of the Acropolis, on the side toward the mountains where there are fewer enemies;

to-morrow may be too late. Fly, and return soon with the aid which we await with anguish!"

Actæon took the gold and the tablets which Alcon offered him, but not without making excuses, realizing the gravity of the undertaking.

"No one can perform the mission better," said the Saguntine; "that is why I have turned to you. Your life has been spent running over the world; you speak many tongues; and you are not lacking in finesse and valor. Are you acquainted with Rome?"

"No, my father's father made war against her, under orders of Pyrrhus."

"Then go to her now as a friend, as an ally, and may the gods grant that some day we shall bless the moment in which you came to Saguntum!"

Actæon was not eager to start. It seemed to him a shameful act to abandon the city at that critical moment, to leave Sónnica within a besieged town.

"I am a stranger, Alcon," he said simply. "No tie of blood unites me to your fate. Are you not afraid that I shall flee forever, leaving you abandoned?"

"No, Athenian, I know you, and that is why I have stood responsible for your fidelity to the Elders. Sónnica also has sworn that you will return if you do not fall into the power of the enemy."

The Greek looked at his beloved as if asking her whether he should go, and she bowed her head, resigned to the sacrifice. Actæon then expressed himself as ready.

"Farewell, Alcon! Tell the Elders that the Athenian Actæon will be crucified in Hannibal's camp or he will appear before the Senate of Rome presenting your suit."

He kissed Sónnica on the eyes again and again, and the beautiful Greek woman, restraining her tears, pleaded to be allowed to follow him along with Alcon as far as the summit of the Acropolis, that she might see him a few moments longer.

The three walked in the dark across the esplanades of the ancient city, along the walls of the Acropolis. They had blown out their torch in order not to attract the attention of the besiegers, and they went on, guided by the diffused light of the stars, which seemed to shine with more brilliancy, as if intensified by the cold of the night which was one of the first of winter.

Alcon was searching for a place on the wall of which he had been told by some of the Elders who were more familiar with the Acropolis. When they had found it the Saguntine groped in the dark until he reached the end of a heavy rope fastened to a merlon, and he flung it over into space.

The departure took place in absolute secret. The very Elders who had planned the journey for their ambassador and had arranged his flight, concealed themselves and did not witness it. Sónnica embraced Actæon, sobbing, and clinging to his neck.

"Go quickly, Athenian," said the Saguntine impatiently. "This first hour of the night is the best; many groups of soldiers are still stirring around the camps before going to sleep. You can pass through now without being observed, while later, in the silence of the night, the sentinels will challenge you."

Actæon freed himself from Sónnica's arms, and leaning over the walls he grasped the rope in the darkness.

"Have confidence in our gods," said Alcon, as a parting word. "Although it may seem as if they have abandoned us, they ever watch over Saguntum. Not long ago a fugitive slave from the camp revealed before the Elders that the Vaccæi and the Carpetani, exasperated by the robbery of the detachments which Hannibal sent to gather supplies, have revolted against him, and have beheaded his emissaries. It seems that Hannibal, with a part of his army, will have to abandon the siege and go to punish them. We shall have fewer enemies before us, and if you return with the legions from Rome, Saguntum will be for the Carthaginians what the Ægates Islands were for them in Sicily. Ah! How much better is peace!"

With this melancholy exclamation Alcon said farewell to the Greek, who descended the rope in silence. His feet soon rested upon a part of the rock on which the wall stood. He let go the rope and began groping his way down, catching hold, in his precipitous descent, of the scrawny olive trees which twisted over the heights as if complaining of the asperity of the rocks.

At the feet of the Greek, in the black solitude of the plain, glittered the light of camp fires. Perhaps they were advance guards of the camp watching that part of the mountain, or marauders who followed the army, and had established themselves there out of Hannibal's sight.

Actæon watched the plain and picked his way cautiously, crouching along by a stony ridge, stopping often to listen, holding his breath. He thought he was being shadowed, that someone was skulking behind him. Not

far away blazed a great fire, and against its lurid smoke silhouettes of men and women were outlined.

When he stood erect to explore the dark fields in order to circle away from the fire, someone suddenly caught him by the shoulders, and a hoarse voice murmured in his ears, between peals of loud and stupid laughter:

"Now I have you at last!——You can not hide yourself from me!"

Actæon squirmed from the clutching hands, and tugging at the broad knife he wore in his belt sprang in front of the unknown in an attitude of defense. It was a woman! By the dim starlight the Greek beheld her gesture of indecision and surprise.

"Are you not Geryon the slinger?" she murmured, holding her hands out to the Athenian.

They stared at each other, their faces almost meeting in the darkness, and the Greek recognized in the woman the unhappy *lupa* who had fed him the first night of his arrival in Saguntum. She seemed even more surprised than the Athenian at the meeting.

"Is it you, Actæon? It seems as if the gods put me in your path, although you scorn me. You are running away from the city, are you not? You must be tired of Sónnica the rich; you do not want to die like those merchants whom Hannibal the invincible will put to the knife! You are doing well! Fly! Fly far away!"

She glanced apprehensively at the camp fire as if she feared the approach of the soldiers who were warming themselves around it, laughing and drinking with a group of *lupas* from the port.

The miserable harlot, in lowered voice, told the Greek why she was there. She was the favorite of Geryon, a

Balearic slinger. He had left his companions a moment before, and had got out of her way so as not to have to give her the wages he had just received, and in searching for him she had stumbled upon Actæon. He might return, or his companions might approach, attracted by their voices; it was dangerous for Actæon to remain where he was.

"What are you going to do?"

"I want to reach the coast, and follow along it until I find a fishing smack which will take me to Emporion or to Denia. I have money to pay my passage. Afterward I will look for a ship to take me away, very far away."

"You will not return, will you? I do not wish you to return. If you only knew how often I have thought of you while men were killing each other on the walls! I shall never see you again, but I would rather not see you than have you remain in the city or become the slave of my lover the slinger. Hannibal will finish all of them! Ah, cruel city! And how I long to see all those rich women fall before Hannibal's troops—those women who used to have us beaten when we came near them at the port!"

The poor harlot, extending her hand to the Greek, began to guide him through the fields.

"Come!" she murmured; "I will conduct you to the beach, and from there you can continue on your way without other help than that of the gods. Seeing you with me they will think you are a Celtiberian soldier with his woman, looking for a place to spend the night. Come! I fed you the first night you came here, and I will save you on this last."

They drew near the shore. As they passed several camp fires they were hailed by obscene calls from the soldiers and the women who thought them an amorous pair in search of a hiding-place. Some armed groups allowed them to pass without the slightest suspicion.

The murmur of the waves on the sand grew louder. They were walking through the rushes, sinking into the warm and oozy bottom of the lagoon formed by the overflow of the tide.

The poor *lupa* stood still.

"Here I leave you, Actæon. If you wished I would follow you as your slave! But you do not wish it; I know what I am——I can be nothing to you! You are going away forever, but I am content because you are fleeing from Sónnica. Before we part, kiss me, my divinity! No, not on the eyes——on the mouth——thus!"

The Athenian, with tender commiseration, moved by the kindness of the miserable creature, kissed the dry and flaccid lips, from which escaped the insufferable odor of the wine of the Balearic slingers.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ROME OF FABIUS THE DELAYER

When the sun's first rays reddened the walls of the Capitol the life of Rome had been astir for more than an hour.

The Romans arose from their couches by the light of the morning stars. Carts from the Campagna rolled in the darkness through the tortuous streets, slaves awakened by the crowing of the cock trudged along carrying baskets and farm utensils, and by the hour of dawn all the houses had their doors thrown open, and the citizens not employed in the fields gathered in the Forum, that centre of traffic and of public business, that had begun to be adorned with the earlier temples, but still retained broad barren spaces upon which in later centuries were to rise the architectural glories of Rome, mistress of the world.

Actæon had been in the great city for two days, lodged in an extramural inn established by a Greek. He never ceased to marvel at this austere Republic, existing almost in poverty, a hardy nation of farmers and soldiers who filled the world with their fame while they endured greater privation than any hamlet on the outskirts of Athens.

Actæon expected to appear before the Senate that very day. The majority of the Fathers of the Republic

lived in the country, in rustic villas with walls of unseasoned adobe roofed with branches, overseeing the work of their slaves, guiding the plow like Cincinnatus and Camillus; when affairs of state called them to the Senate they came into Rome in their carts, drawn by oxen, riding among baskets of vegetables and sacks of grain, and with their toil-calloused hands they arrayed themselves in the toga before entering the Forum, transfigured by the majesty lent by their flowing vestments.

The Greek arrived at the Forum by sunrise, encountering the customary crowd—venerable Romans wrapped in their togas discoursing before the young men and their clients on the art of prudently placing money upon good security, the chief attainment of every citizen; and hungry Greek padagogues scheming ever, in search of a situation among that sombre people more apt in war than in culture; old legionaries, their gray military cloaks covered with patches, their thoughts yearning back to the by-gone wars against Pyrrhus and Carthage, persecuted by debts and threatened with slavery by their creditors, in spite of the cicatrices all over their bodies; and the plebe, with no other clothing than the *lacerna*—a short cape of coarse cloth finished with the *cucullus* or pointed hood—the multitudinous Roman plebe, exploited and oppressed by the patricians, ever dreaming, as a remedy for their ills, of new divisions of the public lands which, by means of usury, gradually fell into the hands of the rich.

On the steps of the Comitium the members of a tribe were gathered to probate the will of one of their people who had just died. Near the military tribune veteran centurions wearing greaves and helmets of bronze stood

leaning on staves of vine-wood, the badge of their military rank, discussing the siege of Saguntum and the audacity of Hannibal, eager to march immediately against the Carthaginian.

On the huge blocks of blue stone which paved the Forum the vendors of hot drinks established their great craters, beating on them with ladles to attract the people, and at the foot of the steps of the temple of Concord some Etruscan buffoons, wearing hideous masks, began their grotesque pantomime, attracting the children and the idle from all sides of the quadrangle.

It was cold; a damp and icy wind was blowing off the Pontine marshes; the sky was gray; and from the crowd stirring about the Forum rose a continuous and melancholy buzzing. Actæon compared this square with the bright Agora of Athens, and even with the Forum of Saguntum in its days of peace. The Grecian joyousness was lacking in Rome, the sweet and gladsome lightness of an artistic people, careless of riches, and if engaging in commerce doing so only that it may live more expansively. This was a people cold and sad, devoted to lucre and to the laying up of money, disdainful of ideals, with no other industry than agriculture and war, squeezing the last grain of wheat from their lands, and robbing the enemy; methodical, lacking initiative and youthfulness.

"This people," said the Athenian to himself, "seems never to have been as young as twenty. Even the children seem to be born old."

Actæon with his Grecian sagacity thought over what he had seen within the two days; the cruel discipline of the family, of the religion, and of the State, which

held the citizens in subjection; their absolute ignorance of poetry and art; that stern training, sad, based only on duty, which obliged every Roman to a long and painful obedience so that he might some day be able to command.

The father, who in Greece was a friend, in Rome was a tyrant. For the Latin city there existed no other member of the family than the father; the wife, the children, the clients, were almost on the level of slaves; they were instruments of toil, without rights and without name. The gods heard only him; in his house he was priest and judge; he could kill his wife, sell the children three times over, and his authority over the offspring persisted down the years; the conquering consul, the omnipotent senator, trembled when in his father's presence; and in this gloomy and despotic organization, more stern even than that of Sparta, Actæon divined a latent force cradled in mystery which some day should burst its bonds, clasping the world as in an embrace of iron. The Greek detested this gloomy nation, but it held his admiration.

Its stamina, the tough and bellicose spirit of the race, were revealed in the Forum. The Capitol on the summit of the sacred mount was a veritable fortress, with naked and gloomy walls, destitute of such decorations as made the citadel of Athens glow with an eternal smile. The temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, with its low roof and its row of flattened, tower-like columns, barely rose above the city ramparts. Below, in the Forum, prevailed a similar grave and gloomy ugliness. The buildings were low and heavy; they seemed rather constructions of war than temples of the gods and public buildings. The great network of highroads starting from the

Forum was the only embellishment in which Rome interested herself, and that because of their usefulness in transporting her legions and in the hauling of farm products. From the Forum the Appian Way could be seen stretching in a straight line, paved with blue stone, with its two rows of tombs which loomed up in the suburbs of the city, fading in the distance through the Campagna in the direction of Capua; and at the opposite extreme led off the Flaminian Way, which ran by the coast, extending into Cisalpine Gaul. Upon the immense Campagna rose like fluttering red banners the first aqueducts constructed during the reign of Appius Claudius to supply the city with fresh water from the mountains, combating thus the malaria of the Pontine marshes.

But aside from these crude monuments, the extensive, gigantic city, which of itself could arm over a hundred and fifty thousand men, presented a savage and wretched aspect, almost like that of those tribes which Actæon had seen on his trip through Celtiberia.

There were few houses of more than a single story; the majority were great cabins of round walls of stone or clay, and conical roofs of boards and logs. After the Gauls burned Rome the city had been reconstructed in a year, haphazard, with precipitate celerity. In some wards the houses were huddled so closely together that they barely gave room for a man to pass between them, while in others they stood apart as if they were country villas surrounded by small fields inside the city walls. Streets did not exist; they were but tortuous prolongations of the roads which led to Rome; arteries formed at random, twisting hither and thither, following the sinuosities of a disorderly construction, and suddenly

broadening into wide, untilled lands where the refuse of the houses was accumulating in piles, and where crows croaked by night, pecking at the carrion of dead dogs and asses.

The crude simplicity of this city of farmers, money lenders, and soldiers, was reflected in the appearance of its inhabitants. Patrician matrons spun wool and hemp at the doors of their houses, clad only in tunics of coarse weave, and wearing bronze ornaments on their breasts and in their ears. The first coinage of silver had taken place subsequent to the war with the Samnites; the clumsy and heavy copper *as* was the current money, and the rich Grecian objects of virtu brought by the legions after the war with Sicily almost received adoration in the homes of the patricians, but were viewed askance by many as amulets which might corrupt the old sturdy Roman customs. Senators who owned extensive territories and hundreds of slaves, paraded their togas covered with patches in civic pride through the Forum. In all Rome there existed but a single table-service of silver, the property of the Republic, which passed from the house of one patrician to that of another when an envoy arrived from Greece, an ambassador from Sicily, or an opulent merchant from Carthage, habituated to Asiatic refinements and in whose honor banquets had to be given.

Actæon, accustomed to philosophic arguments in the Athenian Agora, to dialogues on poetry or on the mysteries of the soul wherever two unoccupied Greeks chanced to meet, strolled through the Forum listening to the conversations carried on in that rude and inflexible Latin which wounded an Athenian's ears. In one group

they were discussing the health of the flocks and the price of wool; in another they were closing the sale of an ox in the presence of five adult citizens who served as witnesses. The purchaser placed the bronze, the value of the purchase, in a balance, and touching the ox with his hand he said in solemn accent, as if reciting an oration:

"This is mine, according to the law of the Quirites. I have paid for it with this metal duly weighed."

Farther on, a legionary with hungry face was adjusting a loan with an old man, offering as security his helmet and his greaves, and pronouncing the formulas of the law in such a case:

"*Dari spondes?*" (Do you promise to give?) the soldier asked.

"*Spondeo*" (I promise), replied the lender.

The bargain was closed with these sober words, the alteration of a single syllable in which was sufficient to annul the operation, for the Romans professed a superstitious respect for the letter and formula of their laws.

In another group they were discussing the points which a slave must have in order to be useful to his master and to be maintained by him; and throughout the entire Forum this grave people, austere, and without ideals, talked only of possessions, and of the manner of increasing them.

The attention of the Greek was attracted by a youth who, although barely twenty years of age, displayed the gravity of an old man. His hair was red and close-cropped; his steady gaze gave him an expression of intelligence and penetration. He was walking slowly

beside a boy who was listening to him attentively, as to his master.

"Although your father is consul," said the red-headed man, "you must not forget, Scipio, that in order to be a good citizen and to serve the Republic, it is necessary not only to know how to use the lance and to manage a horse, but to know how to till the soil, and to be familiar with the secrets of cultivation. Some day you may command our armies, and you will not only have to conquer lands for Rome, but cultivate them, so that they will produce abundantly. Do you realize that?"

"Yes, Cato," said the youth.

"Every day you should learn a month of the calendar which our forefathers made. With that well fixed in your memory it will be easier for you to command your slaves promptly and well in their work in the fields. Yesterday I taught you the month of May; repeat it, Scipio."

"Month of May," recited the boy wrinkling his brows in order to better concentrate his mind. "Thirty-one days. The nones fall on the seventh day. The day has fourteen and a half hours; the night nine hours and a half. The sun is in the sign of Taurus; the month is under the protection of Apollo. Wheat should be weeded. Sheep should be shorn. The wool should be washed. Young steers should be put under the yoke. The vetch should be mown in the meadows. The lustration of the crops should be performed. Sacrifices to Mercury and to Flora."

"You remember it well, Scipio. Our ancestors neither had nor desired any other science; they were satisfied with knowing what they should do in each month throughout the year, and with this, and with valor and audacity

to hold their fields, and to take possession of the lands of their neighbors, they founded our city, which grows and will grow until it becomes the greatest in the world. We are not charlatans like the Greeks, who kneel in admiration before marble puppets and argue like buffoons about what comes after death. We are not madly ambitious like the Carthaginians, who base their life on commerce and risk all their wealth upon the sea. Our life is spent on the land; we are ruder but more solid than other people; we advance more slowly, but we shall go farther. On the soil which we tread for the first time we do not set up a tent as do others; we plunge in the plow, and that is why what Rome takes none wrests from her. Do not forget that, Scipio!"

The Athenian followed not far behind. The words of that man, old at twenty years, taught him more than his observations. Rome seemed to speak through his mouth in that lesson given to the son of one of her consuls.

"You should know also," continued Cato, "the domestic rules of every good citizen. When our fathers wished to eulogize a worthy man they called him 'a good husbandman.' This was the highest praise. At that time they lived on the land itself, in rustic tribes, the most honorable of all, and they only saw Rome on market days and on days of *comitia*. There are still good citizens who lead the sane life of Cincinnatus and Camillus, and only come when the Senate gathers; but war, with its expeditions to new countries, has corrupted many, who wish only to live in the city, and they have substituted for the old Roman home, with its roof of boards and its simple penates, houses crowded with columns

as if they were temples, and adorned with gods and goddesses which they order from Greece."

The austere gesture of Cato displayed immense scorn for the imported refinements which had begun to break down the sturdiness of his native land.

"In the country the good citizen should not lose a day. If the weather prevent his going out he should entertain himself cleaning the stables and barnyards, fixing up the old utensils, and seeing that the women mend the clothing. Even on feast days something can be done; irrigate the young vineyards, wash the sheep, go to the city to sell oil or fruit. No time should be lost in consulting haruspices and augurs, nor in devotion to cults which oblige the citizen to abandon his house. The gods of the household or of the nearest cross-road are sufficient. The lares, the manes, and the silvani are sufficient to protect a good citizen. Our fathers had no others, but nevertheless they were great."

The youthful Scipio listened attentively, but his eyes were fixed on two young men from the Campagna, who with the *cucullus* fallen over their shoulders, were having a boxing match close to a vendor of mulled wine. The young man's cheeks flushed with emotion seeing the blows exchanged by the athletes with quivering muscles.

"If the citizen dwell in Rome," continued Cato, without noticing this incident which failed to disturb the gravity of the Forum, "he should open the door of his house at dawn of day to explain the law to his clients, and to place his money prudently, teaching the young men the art of increasing their savings and how to avoid ruinous follies. The father of the family should turn everything into money and waste nothing. If he give

new garments to his slaves, he should recover the old ones for other uses. He should sell the oil and the wine and the wheat which are left over at the close of the year. Let him also sell the old oxen, the calves, lambs, the wool, the hides, the unserviceable carts, the rusty iron, the old, infirm, and sick slaves. Let him be ever selling. The father of the family should be the seller, not the buyer. Note that well, Scipio!"

But Scipio was restless and scarcely heard him.

The rustics had ceased boxing, and the youth, eager to be off, glanced far away toward the river.

"Cato, this is the time for athletics. I must go to the bank of the Tiber to train myself in running and in pugilism, and to take an hour for swimming afterward."

"Go when you will, and heed my advice. After the lesson, athletics and the cold bath, which harden the body, are excellent. The citizen who wishes to serve his country must not only be prudent but strong."

The boy walked away, and Cato retracing his steps met the Greek who was following him. Actæon's appearance attracted him, and he approached.

"Greek," he said, "what do you think of our city?

"It is a gloomy town, but a great one. I have been in Rome only three days."

"Are you, perchance, the messenger from Saguntum, who will appear before the Senate to-day?"

Actæon replied in the affirmative, and the Roman leaned on his arm with grave familiarity, as if he were an old friend.

"You will accomplish very little," he said. "The Senate is suffering with a sickness just now—an excess of prudence! I detest mad deeds; I do not believe that

Hannibal is a great captain, since I see him commit such an audacity as the siege of Saguntum; but I cannot tolerate in silence the faint-heartedness with which Rome proceeds in her affairs. She wishes to avail herself of all means to keep the peace. She fears war, while war with Carthage is inevitable. She and our city will not fit in the same sack. The world is too small for the two. I am always saying, 'Let us destroy Carthage!' and they laugh at me. Some years ago, when the war of the mercenaries broke out, we could have crushed her with ease. By sending to Africa a brace of legions the revolted Numidians and the mercenaries would have finished with Carthage; but we were afraid; after her victory Rome occupied herself only in healing her wounds. We feared the uprising of the soldiery of all countries, so we saved Carthage, helping her to destroy her revolted mercenaries."

"It is different now," said Actæon, with energy. "Saguntum is an ally, and if Hannibal makes war upon her it is on account of the love which the city professes for Rome."

"Yes; that is why we Romans are interested in her fate; but do not hope for much from the Senate. It is more anxious about the pirates of the Adriatic who harrow our coasts, that rebellion of Demetrius of Pharos in Illyria, against whom we are about to send an army under command of the consul Lucius Æmilius."

"But what of Saguntum? If you abandon her how will you resist the audacious Hannibal, who leads the most warlike tribes of Iberia? What will those unfortunates say of the seriousness with which Rome observes her alliances?"

"Try to convince the Senate with your arguments. I am convinced; I see in Carthage the sole enemy of Rome. Would that they were all of my mind! They would then accept the audacious challenge of the son of Hamilcar and would declare war against Carthage, going to meet her in her own territory! Happen what may, we are invincible. Italy is a compact mass, and as advance sentinels of our camp, we have in the Orient Illyria, on the side which looks into Africa we have Sicily, and in the Occident is Sardinia, while the lands which Carthage dominates form an extensive belt of nine hundred leagues which runs along a great part of the coasts of Africa and all those of Iberia; but so narrow, and peopled by so many different races, that it can easily be broken. Though Rome might lose a hundred battles, she will always be Rome, but one defeat for Carthage is enough to dissolve the nation."

"If only they all thought as you do, Cato!"

"If the Senate thought as I do it would scorn Demetrius of Pharos, and its legions would have been in Saguntum days ago. Perhaps by such means a danger would be avoided, because who knows where that young African will go, and what he may not dare if he succeed in conquering without hindrance a city allied to Rome! That is why I, a free citizen, give lessons as a pedagogue, as you have just witnessed. That boy is the son of the consul Publius Cornelius Scipio, and all the virtues of his family are revived in him. Perhaps he may be the one destined to bar Hannibal's way, to destroy the insolent power of that Carthage against whom we are ever clashing."

They continued strolling through the Forum discussing

the customs of Rome, and arguing warmly as they contrasted them with those of Athens. Then the austere Roman, having to hold conference with various patricians in regard to private affairs, to which he attended with great scrupulousness, said farewell to the Greek.

On being left alone Actæon realized that he was hungry. It would be some time before the Senate would assemble, and wearied of the noisy stir in the Forum he passed on, walking around the base of the Capitoline, following a street broader than the others, lined with stone buildings, which displayed through their open doors the relative abundance of patrician families.

He entered a bakery and rapped on the stone of the deserted counter with an *as*. A plaintive voice answered from a kind of cavern. The Greek peered into the gloomy grotto and saw a mill for grinding wheat, and yoked to it a man, who was turning it with great effort.

The slave came out almost naked, wiping off the sweat which was streaming down his forehead, and taking the money offered by the Greek handed him a round loaf. Then he stood looking Actæon over with curiosity.

"Do you own the bakery?" Actæon asked.

"I am nothing but a slave," he replied sadly. "My master had to go to the Forum to see the dealers in wheat. You are a Greek, are you not?"

Before Actæon deigned to answer, he hastened to add with melancholy pride:

"I have not always been a slave. I have been in this condition but a short time, and before I lost my freedom my fervent desire was to visit your country. O Athens! The city where poets are gods!"

He recited in Greek some verses from the Prometheus of Æschylus, astonishing Actæon by the purity of his accent and by the expression which he communicated to his words.

"Can it be that here in Rome your masters dedicate you to poesy?" asked the Athenian, laughing.

"I was a poet before I became a slave. My name is Plautus."

Glancing around as if fearing to be surprised by some member of his master's family he continued talking, happy at being able to free himself from the torment of the mill.

"I have written comedies. I tried to establish the theatre in Rome, which is almost a cult among your people. The Romans have little sensibility to poetry. They love farces; a tragedy that would move the Hellenes to tears, leaves them cold; one of Aristophanes' comedies would put them to sleep. They, Athenian, enjoy only the Etruscan buffoons, those grotesque comedians of the farces which they call Atellanæ, and the hideous maskers with sharp teeth and deformed heads who stalk in the triumphal processions growling their obscenities. They would stone the heroes of your tragedies, while on the other hand, they howl with enthusiasm at the entry of a victorious consul when the soldiers pass disguised in rams' skins, wearing tufts of bristling horse-hair, and they laugh at seeing them avenge themselves for their humble condition by insulting the conqueror behind his triumphal car. I wrote comedies for these people, and I write them still in moments when my master ceases beating me to make me turn the mill. The patricians, the free citizens, do not enjoy seeing themselves personated

in the scene. Here they would rend Aristophanes to pieces, he who represented upon the stage the most prominent men of Athens. My heroes are slaves, foreigners, and mercenaries, and they make the audience laugh. I have finished a comedy there within that den, ridiculing the fanfare of the warriors. I would recite it if I did not fear that my master might return at any moment."

"But how have you fallen into such a wretched situation after having been the entertainer of your people?"

"I committed the madness of founding the first theatre in Rome, in imitation of those in Greece. It was a wooden enclosure on the outskirts of the city. I borrowed money; I contracted debts; the populace came to laugh, but they gave little. I was ruined, and the wise laws of Rome condemn him who cannot pay to become the slave of his creditor. This baker who used to laugh at my comedies, and who gladly loaned me sacks of copper, is now getting even for his former show of admiration by making me turn his mill, because I cost less than an ass. Every peal of laughter in the past is transformed into a blow with a stick dealt across my back. The fate of poets! You Greeks also thanked Æschylus for his verses by pelting him with stones, yet he was ever a freeman."

Plautus became silent, but after a melancholy smile he added:

"I trust in the future. I shall not always have to be a slave; perhaps I shall find someone who will give me back my liberty. The Romans who make war and see new countries return with milder customs and with a love of art. I shall be free, I will found a new theatre, and then,——then——"

Hope shone in his glance, as if he saw the realization of the dreams with which he embellished his gloomy den, while, panting like a beast, he turned the enormous cone of stone.

A noise was heard from within the house, and before his master's children could see him Plautus ran to yoke himself again to the mill-spindle, while the Greek left the place, astounded by this episode.

What a people this, which converted its debtors into slaves and turned its poets into beasts of burden!

The Greek sauntered back through the Forum munching his loaf of bread. He was waiting for the Senate to assemble, and to pass away the time he climbed to the crest of the Palatine Hill, the sacred ground which was the cradle of Rome. He visited the Lupercal Grotto where Romulus and Remus had been suckled by the she-wolf. At the entrance to the narrow cave, denuded by the winter, the Ruminal fig tree extended its naked branches, the famous tree in the shade of which the twin founders of the city had frolicked. Near it on a granite pedestal stood the wolf, in dark and lustrous bronze, the work of an Etruscan artist, with the hideous half-open fauces, and her belly bristling with a double row of gleaming teats to which two naked children clung, sprawling on the ground.

From this height Actæon looked down upon the broad city, a wave of roofs between the seven hills, invading the heights and dispersing through the deep valleys. Almost at the side of the Palatine rose the Capitolium, the great fortress of Rome, on the naked crags of the Tarpeian rock, and the Greek passed from the summit of

one to that of the other to examine the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, more famous than beautiful.

He turned his back on the rude temple of Mars, which occupied the highest point of the Palatine, and following a path between abrupt rocks he crossed to the Capitoline. On his way he met the priests of Jupiter, walking with sacerdotal rigidity as if ever offering sacrifices to their god. He saw the vestals wrapped in their flowing white veils, marching with a sturdy tread. Some *milites* were climbing up to the temple of Mars, their broad breasts encased in overlapping bands of copper, their bare thighs covered by strips of wool hanging from the waist; one hand resting on the pommel of their short swords while they talked with enthusiasm of the coming Illyrian campaign, without thought of the situation of their allies in Iberia.

Actæon entered the sacred precincts of the Capitoline, surrounded by frowning ramparts. It was the ancient mount Tarpeius, with its two summits united by an extensive flat. The higher part which lay toward the north was occupied by the Arx or citadel of Rome; on the south was the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, surrounded by massive columns.

The Greek entered the citadel, famous for its resistance during the invasion of the Gauls. On the margin of a pool before the temples huddled within the strong enclosure he saw the sacred birds—the geese which with their cackling in the silence of the night had protected Rome from the surprise of the invaders. Then he crossed the depression which divides the hill into two parts, and approached the great fane of Rome.

A stairway of a hundred steps led to the temple, con-

structed in the time of the last Tarquin in honor of the three divinities of Rome—Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva. The building consisted of three *cellæ* or parallel sanctuaries, with three doors opening beneath the same pediment. The one in the centre was sacred to Jupiter, and the smaller ones on either side to the two goddesses. A triple row of columns sustained the pediment, which was decorated with prancing horses coarsely sculptured. Two rows of columns ran down the sides of the temple forming a portico, in the shade of which the eldest Roman citizens strolled, discussing the affairs of the city.

The temple had been built by artists called from Etruria, and under the colonnade were statues acquired by the expeditions to Sicily and as a result of the many wars carried on by Rome. This rude nation was incapable of producing artists, but it had soldiers to supply it with art by means of war and loot.

The Athenian entered the sanctuary in the centre dedicated to Jupiter, and he saw the image of the god in terra cotta, holding a golden lance in his right hand. Before him continually smoked the Altar of Sacrifices. On leaving the temple he glanced at the gnomon or sundial, which at that height marked the time for all Rome.

It was now the hour to go to the Senaculum, the ancient building at the foot of the Tarpeian peak between the Capitolium and the Forum, which many years later was converted into the temple of Concord. On the steps which gave access to the temple Actæon met the two legates sent by Saguntum before the siege began; two old farmers who had gone away from home for the

first time, and who seemed to be dazed by their long months of waiting in Rome, with their audiences which never terminated, and with their interviews and resultless supplications. The two perturbed Saguntines, impotent before a city which never responded definitely to their words, followed like automata the self-confident Greek who went everywhere as if he were in his own house, and who spoke many languages as if the entire world were his country.

The senators began to arrive. Some came from their business in the city and presented themselves garbed in the white toga with purple border, followed by their clients who turned their gaze in all directions as if to attract public attention to their majestic protector. Others came from the country, drawing up their carts before the steps of the Senaculum, and, handing the reins to a slave, ascended to the temple with their togas flung over their arms, dressed in the short cloak of coarse wool worn by farmers, and emitting the odors of their stables and crops. They were mature men who displayed in the firmness of their strong muscles the activity of their life of continued struggle with the soil and with enemies; old men with long beards and wizened faces, tremulous with age, who still revealed in their unflinching eyes reliance on their departing strength. The crowd from the Forum, surging toward the steps of the Senaculum, watched them with admiration and respect. They were the fathers of the Republic, the heads of Rome.

The two legates from Saguntum walked up the temple steps. Under the columns which sustained the pediment were numberless piles of loot from the last

wars, deposited by the conquerors as they paraded through the Forum before the multitude, which had hailed them, waving branches of laurel. Actæon saw shields pierced by iron swords, rusted by blood; war-chariots with broken tongues, the gilded wheels bespattered with the mud of battles. They were spoils from the war with the Samnites. Farther on, standing along the wall, a row of hideous wooden dwarfs, dyed red and blue, stripped from the prows of Carthaginian ships after the great victory at the Ægates Islands; iron bars which had closed the gates of many cities conquered by the Romans; the golden standards decorated with fantastic animals which led the troops of Pyrrhus; the enormous tusks of the elephants which this descendent of Achilles had marched against the legions of Rome; the horned or eagle-winged helmet of the Ligurians; the darts of Alpine tribes, and, beside the door, as a trophy of honor, the armor of the glorious Camillus, paraded in triumph by the city after this great Roman had driven the Gauls from the Capitol. Along the walls, as a strange decoration, hung a long dark tissue, crisp as parchment. It was the skin of the great serpent which for a whole day held back the army of Atilius Regulus, when on his expedition to Africa he was marching to the conquest of Carthage. The horrible monster, insensible to arrows, devoured many soldiers before it succumbed beneath a shower of stones, and Regulus sent the reptile's skin to Rome as a testimony of the adventure.

The envoys from Saguntum had a tedious wait before a centurion ushered them into the Senaculum.

The Greek, sweeping his glance over the semicircle, was perturbed by the majesty of the assemblage. He recalled the entrance of the Gauls into Rome; the stupefaction of the barbarians in the presence of those Elders, firm in their marble chairs, wrapped like phantoms in their snowy garments which left uncovered only their silvery beards; their ivory staves held with a divine majesty, revealed again in the gleam from their steady eyes. None but barbarians intoxicated with blood-lust would dare to assault men of such patriarchal dignity.

They numbered more than two hundred. Between them were vacant seats of senators unable to attend, and over the concentric rows of marble chairs the white togas spread out like newly fallen snow upon a crust of ice. Behind them stood a row of columns in a semicircle, sustaining the cupola through which filtered a crepuscular light which seemed to favor meditation and concentration of the mind. A low stone balustrade surrounded the semicircle, and beyond it were grouped important citizens who had not the investiture of senators. In the centre the barrier was broken by a square pedestal sustaining the bronze she-wolf with the twins hanging to her dugs, and on the base in great letters, the device of supreme authority in Rome: "S.P.Q.R." A tripod sustained a brazier before the pedestal, and over the embers floated a blue cloud of incense.

The three legates seated themselves in marble chairs near the image of the wolf, before the triple row of white and motionless men.

Some rested their chins in their hands as if to hear better.

They might speak; the Senate would hear them; and Actæon, moved by the supplicating glances of his two companions, arose. In his mind impressions did not linger long; he had recovered from the emotion produced at first by the majesty of the assemblage.

He spoke deliberately, taking care, after the manner of a true Greek, to avoid lapses of style in expressing himself in that rude tongue, endeavoring to give to his words the emotion which he wished to inspire in the representatives of Rome. He described the desperate resistance of Saguntum, and her confidence in the support of the Republic, that blind faith which had inspired her people to hurl themselves outside the walls and repulse the enemy at the mere announcement that the Roman fleet had appeared upon the horizon. When he left the city it still had supplies for subsistence and courage to defend itself. But much time had elapsed since then—nearly two whole months. The ambassador had been compelled to make his way amidst adventures and perils, sometimes by sea, taking advantage of the routes of the merchant ships, again on foot along the coasts, and at this moment the situation of the city must be desperate. Saguntum would fall if they did not go to her succor, and what a responsibility for Rome if she abandoned her protégé after the latter had drawn Hannibal's enmity upon her for wishing to be Roman! How could other nations rely on the friendship of Rome when they knew the sad end of Saguntum!

The Greek ceased speaking, and the painful silence which fell over the Senate revealed the profound impression his words had made.

Then Lentulus, an aged senator, arose to speak. The sharp voice of the old man penetrated the silence as he told of the origin of Saguntum, which if it were Grecian on account of the merchants of Zacynthus having established their factories there, was also Italian on account of the Rutulians from Ardea who had gone thither in remote times to found a colony. Moreover Saguntum was the friend of Rome. To be more faithful to her she had beheaded some of her citizens who had worked in the cause of Carthage. What audacity for that young man, a son of Hamilcar, to ignore the treaties of Rome with Hasdrubal, and to dare to raise his sword against a city friendly to the Romans! If Rome looked with indifference upon this offense Hamilcar's lion-cub would grow in temerity, for youth knows no bridle when it sees its imprudence crowned by success. Moreover, the great city could not tolerate such daring. Outside, at the door of the Senaculum were the glorious trophies of war as a demonstration that he who revolted against Rome should fall conquered at her feet. They must be inexorable with the enemy and faithful to the ally; they must carry the war into Iberia and destroy the reckless one who defied Rome.

All the choler of the gloomy city, warlike and severe, spoke through the mouth of the aged man, who extended his rigid arm above his companions' heads, threatening the invisible enemy. The soldierly vigor of the veteran of ancient wars against the Samnites and against Pyrrhus, was aroused for a moment in the weak old man, and thrilled his muscles and caused his eyes to flash.

Actæon's two companions, who did not understand the Latin tongue, nevertheless divined Lentulus' words,

and they were filled with emotion by the eulogy of the self-abnegation of their city. Tears streamed from their eyes, they rent the dark mantles in which they were clad as solemn messengers, and throwing themselves to the floor to express the vehemence of their grief after the custom of the ancients, they shouted, sobbing:

"Save us! Save us!"

The desperation of the two old men, and the dignified attitude of the Greek, who, frowning and silent, seemed the personification of Saguntum awaiting the fulfillment of pledges, moved the Senate and the multitude that surged outside the balustrade of the she-wolf. All were agitated and were exchanging words of indignation. Beneath the cupola of the Senaculum resounded a disorderly buzzing, the echo of a thousand mingled voices. They clamored for the Senate to declare instant war against Carthage, to call out the legions, to make ready the ships, to embark an expedition in the port of Ostia, and to hurl Rome against the camp of Hannibal.

A senator called for silence that he might speak. It was Fabius, one of the most famous patricians of Rome, the descendent of those three hundred heroes of that famous gens destroyed in a single day fighting for Rome on the banks of the Cremera. Prudence spoke through his mouth; his counsels were ever followed as being wisest; on this account the Senate recovered its calmness as soon as it saw that he had arisen to his feet.

With reposeful language, after lamenting the situation of the allied city, he said that it was not known whether it were Carthage that had broken into hostilities against Saguntum, or whether Hannibal had done

so on his own account. A war in Iberia would be a grave matter for Rome, now that she was going to begin a nearer struggle with the rebel Demetrius of Pharos. It would be advisable to send an embassy to Hannibal in his camp, and if the African refused to raise the siege, let it go to Carthage to ask if its rulers approved the chieftain's conduct, and to demand that the latter be turned over to Rome in punishment for his audacity.

This solution seemed to please the Senate. Those who a few moments before had shown themselves warlike and uncompromising bowed their heads as if approving the words of Fabius. The thought of the insurrection in Illyria counseled prudence to the most violent. They remembered the enemy who was rising almost at their doors across the Adriatic, and who, with their fleets given over to piracy, might attempt an invasion of Roman territory. Egoism caused them to look upon this enterprise as more important than any oath, and in order to deceive themselves and to hide their own weakness, they exaggerated the importance of the embassy to Hannibal's camp declaring that the African would raise the siege and ask pardon of Rome as soon as he saw the Senatorial legates arrive.

Actæon received this change on the part of the assemblage with visible signs of impatience.

"I know Hannibal well," he shouted. "He will not obey you; he will scoff at you! If you do not send an army the journey of your legates will be useless!"

But the senators, eager to conceal the weakness to which their egoism drove them, protested loudly against the words of Actæon. Who spoke of scoffing at the Republic of Rome? Who imagined that Hannibal would

scorn the envoys of the Senate? Let the stranger maintain silence—he who was not even a son of the city in whose name he spoke.

Actæon bowed his head. Then, turning to his aged companions, who did not understand the resolution of the Senate, he murmured: "Our city is lost! Rome fears to declare war against Hannibal and delays the clash of arms. When they become ready to help us Saguntum will no longer exist!"

The three Saguntine legates received an order to retire. The senators were about to appoint two patricians who should go as envoys of Rome.

As they left the Senaculum the eldest of the senators addressed Actæon:

"Tell your companions to prepare for the journey. To-morrow at sunset you will embark with the legates of the Senate in the port of Ostia."

CHAPTER IX

THE HUNGRY CITY

THE trireme conveying the Roman legates had been on her voyage more than fifteen days.

She had sailed up the coasts of the Tyrrhenian Sea; she had then crossed the Sea of Liguria, bound by abrupt coasts, and had passed before Massilia, the prosperous Grecian colony, also allied to Rome. Then, audaciously crossing the broad gulf, she had turned her prow toward Emporion, and had skirted the coasts of Iberia.

The ambassadors from Rome were the patricians Valerius Flaccus, one of those who desired to maintain the peace with prudent words, and Bæbius Tamphilus who enjoyed the love of the Roman plebs because of his sympathy for their sufferings.

Actæon displayed impatience to reach Saguntum. He wished to confer with his friends and avoid the useless sacrifice of the city, explaining to them the mood of Rome so that they should not persist in a useless defense. For seven months Saguntum had held out in strenuous resistance. Autumn had not yet commenced when Hannibal's army had appeared before the city, and it was now near the end of winter.

The Greek reflected sadly upon the fond illusions he had cherished while making his adventurous and perilous

way to Rome. He had hoped that his presence in the great city, and his story of the sufferings of the faithful ally, would arouse the Romans, and that the legions would shout for vengeance——but he was returning without soldiers, in a ship with ambassadors feigning interest in Saguntum but not deeply moved by her misfortunes——returning without other support than high-sounding, impotent words, and a bronze wolf on the end of a staff proclaiming the dignity of the embassy.

What of the enthusiastic and credulous multitude fighting on the walls, filling the yawning breach with their unflinching breasts, and who to gather fresh courage only needed to imagine the coming of the Romans! ——What would they say? Then, with a sudden turn of thought, what of Sónnica, she so brave, sending him that he might save the city! How could she, accustomed to a life of luxury and ease, live in the misery and horror of that siege, which had endured until the stores of the city must be consumed, and the energy of its defenders exhausted!

The ship left the mouth of the Ebro, and struggling against contrary winds, at length, one morning, sighted the Acropolis of Saguntum. From the tall tower of Hercules shot up a cloud of smoke in greeting! They had recognized the vessel by the square rigging of the Roman men-of-war.

The sun was in the zenith when the ship, with reefed sails, and driven by the triple bank of oars, stood into the channel which gave entrance to the port of Saguntum. Within the harbor, above the reeds waving in the marshes, rose the masts of Carthaginian vessels anchored in the triple port.

The crew of the Roman ship beheld great troops of horsemen galloping along the beach. They were squadrons of Numidians and Mauritanians, waving their lances and uttering war cries as when charging in battle.

One horseman, with bronze armor and uncovered head, had called to them to heave to. Advancing alone, he urged his horse into the channel, approaching the ship until the waters rose to the animal's belly.

Actæon recognized him.

"That is Hannibal," he said to the two legates standing beside him on the poop, who were watching with astonishment the bellicose character of their reception before they had even cast anchor in the port of Saguntum.

Fresh squadrons continued to arrive, as if the news of the coming ship had spread alarm through the camp, attracting all the troops to the port. Behind the cavalry came the fierce Celtiberians at full speed, the Balearic slingers, all the foot-soldiers, of diverse races who figured in the besieging army.

Hannibal, even at the risk of drowning, pressed his horse forward into the waters of the channel to make himself heard on the ship, and ordering them to stop he held up his hand so imperiously that in an instant the oars dropped motionless along the hull.

"Who are you? What do you want?" he asked in Greek.

Actæon interpreted between the Romans and the Carthaginian chief.

"They are legates from Rome, coming to see you in the name of the Republic."

"Who are you, speaking to me in a voice that I seem to know?"

He shaded his eyes with his hand, and looked keenly until he recognized the Greek.

"Is it you, Actæon? Always you, restless Athenian! I thought you were within the city, yet you have managed to slip away to bring these men to me. Well and good! Tell them it is too late. Why waste words? A chieftain who lays siege to a city only receives ambassadors after he is inside the walls."

The Greek repeated Hannibal's words to the Romans, translating their replies.

"Listen, African!" said Actæon to Hannibal. "The envoys from Rome remind you of the friendship which they have contracted with Saguntum. In the name of the Senate and the Roman people they call upon you to raise the siege and to respect the city."

"Tell them that Saguntum has offended me, and that she was first in declaring war by sacrificing my friends and by refusing to respect my allies, the Turdetani."

"That is not true, Hannibal."

"Greek, repeat what I say to the Romans."

"The legates wish to land. They must speak to you in the name of Rome."

"It is useless. They cannot make me desist from my enterprise. Moreover, the siege has lasted long, the troops are excited and a camp like mine, composed of ferocious peoples from many countries, who are only restrained when in my presence, is no safe place for ambassadors from Rome. We had a battle only a few hours ago, and they are still fuming with wrath."

As he said this he turned toward his troops, and, as if taking the movement for an order, or perhaps divining in the eyes of their chieftain his hidden purpose, they

advanced into the water as if to attack by swimming against the ship. Horsemen threatened with lances still dyed in the blood of recent battle; they raised their shields, on which the more savage Africans had hung as trophies the scalps of Saguntines killed in the last sally. The Balearians showed their white teeth in stupid grins, and taking clay balls from their pouches, they directed sling-shots against the Roman vessel.

"Do you see?" shouted Hannibal with satisfaction. "It is impossible to receive the legates in my camp. It is too late to talk. There is nothing left but for Saguntum to give herself up to me in punishment for her crimes."

The legates, scorning the projectiles from the slings, leaned over the side of the ship, thrusting forward their bodies covered by their togas, with an arrogance which seemed to defy the savage warriors.

Indignation at being received with such scorn blanched their cheeks.

"African!" shouted one of the legates in Latin, heedless that Hannibal could not understand, "since you will not receive the envoys from Rome we shall go on to Carthage to demand that they turn your person over to us for breaking the treaties of Hasdrubal. Rome will punish you when you become our prisoner!"

"What does he say? What does he say?" growled Hannibal enraged at the incomprehensible words in which he surmised a threat.

When Actæon explained, the chieftain burst into a loud laugh of derision.

"Go, Romans!" he shouted. "Go thither! The rich hate me and they would be glad to grant your demands

and turn me over to the enemy; but the people love me, and there is no man in Carthage who dares to come into the bosom of my army to make me prisoner."

Arrows rained around the ship; clay balls rebounded from her sides, and the Roman pilot gave the order to recede. The oars moved and the vessel slowly began to put about, and dropped down the channel.

"But are we going to Carthage?" asked the Greek.

"Yes, in Carthage they will hear us better," replied one of the legates. "After what has taken place, either the Senate there will turn Hannibal over to us, or Rome will declare war on Carthage."

"You may go, Romans, but my duty lies here."

Before the two senators and the legates from Saguntum, who had witnessed the former scene with astonishment, could interfere, the Athenian flung one leg over the rail and sprang head first into the channel. He swam under water for some time, then came up, floating near the bank, to which the cavalry and foot-soldiers had rushed to take him prisoner.

Before his feet touched ground Actæon was surrounded by a horde of slingers who rushed into the water up to their middles to take possession of his clothing without having to divide it among their comrades. In an instant they tore off his Celtiberian sword, the pouch hanging from his belt, and a gold chain which he wore on his breast in memory of Sónnica. They were about to strip him of his traveling tunic, leaving him naked, and he had begun to receive blows from the barbarous and cruel crowd, when Hannibal rode up and recognized him.

"You have preferred to stay! I am glad of that. After having wrought me so much damage from the walls of Saguntum you have repented and you have come to join with me. I ought to leave you in the hands of these barbarians who would rend you to pieces; I ought to crucify you outside my camp so that that Greek woman whom you love could shudder at you; but I remember the promise I made you, and I shall keep it, and welcome you as a friend."

He ordered one of his officials to cover the Greek's wet garments with an *endromis,* a military cloak of long hair with a hood, worn by soldiers over their armor in winter. Then he bade him mount a Numidian's horse.

They took up their march toward the camp. The troops who had rushed to the entrance of the port slowly returned, while the ship fast dropped the land, spreading her glowing sails. On the Acropolis the smoke had dissipated, leaving only a few light clouds floating in the breeze. From afar one could guess the disappointment felt in the city by the unexpected flight of the Roman ship. With her seemed to vanish the last hope of the besieged. Hannibal's troops, as they retired, commented on the scene at the entrance to the port between their chief and the envoys from Rome. They did not understand the words which had been exchanged; but the energetic accent of the Roman as he spoke to Hannibal seemed to them a threat. Some, pretending that they had understood the ambassador, repeated an imaginary discourse in which the threat was made in the name of Rome to cut the throats of the whole army and to stretch Hannibal on a cross. They repeated these threats, each swelling them with inventions of his

own, and when the troops met other detachments on the Road of the Serpent or in different parts of the valley, all declared they had seen the chains which the Roman legates displayed from the ship, and in which they expected to take their chieftain prisoner, and a howl of rage arose from the hosts of Hannibal.

The African was flattered at the flood-tide of indignation surging around him. The soldiers, barring his way, acclaimed him with greater enthusiasm; he heard voices in every tongue crying death to Rome, calling upon the chieftain to make the final assault upon the city, to take possession of it before the ambassadors should reach Carthage and plot the downfall of the youthful hero.

"Take care of yourself, Hannibal!" said an old Celtiberian planting himself before his horse. "Your enemies in Carthage, Hanno's faction, will unite with Rome to work your ruin."

"The people love me," said the chieftain, arrogantly. "Before the Carthaginian Senate hears the Romans, Saguntum will be ours, and the Carthaginians will acclaim our triumph."

With saddened heart Actæon beheld the desolation of the fields which used to be so joyous and so fertile. There were no other ships in the port but men-of-war from New Carthage. The seamen slept in the fane of Aphrodite after having rifled the temple of its valuables. The warehouses had been pillaged and destroyed; the wharves covered with filth; in the fields not a vestige of the ancient villas remained. The ferocity of the barbarian tribes from the interior, their hatred for the Greeks of the coast, had incited them to even tear up

the multicolor pavements and to scatter the fragments. The whole valley was an immense, desolated plain. Not a tree was standing. To combat the cold of winter they had felled the groves of fig trees, the broad plantations of olives, the stocks of the grapevines of the vineyards, destroying even the houses to warm themselves with the rafters from the roofs. Nothing remained standing but ruined walls and low shrubbery. A fungoid vegetation which grew rapidly, fertilized by bodies of men and animals, extended over the valley, obliterating the ancient roads, creeping up the ruins, and choking the beds of the streams which, their irrigating ditches broken, scattered their waters until the low fields were converted into ponds.

It was the devastating work of a continually swelling army composed of a hundred and eighty thousand men and of many thousands of horses. In a short time they had devoured the Saguntine domain. The soldiers after destroying all that was not of immediate use, extended their rapacity to surrounding zones, constantly broadening their radius of destruction as the siege was prolonged.

Supplies now came from a distance of many days' journey; sent by remote tribes in the hope of a reward of booty which Hannibal knew how to instill into their minds, telling them of the riches of Saguntum. The elephants had been sent to New Carthage some months before, as they were useless in the siege and difficult to maintain in this devastated region.

Over the domain flew crows in undulating black clouds. From the thicket rose the stench of rotting horses and mules. By the roadsides, their members

pinned to the ground by rocks, lay the bodies of barbarians put to death because of hopeless wounds, and whose bodies their compatriots, according to the customs of their race, left abandoned to the birds of prey. The immense agglomeration had vitiated the atmosphere of the valley. They lived in the open, and yet, the filth of the multitude, and the vapors of death, seemed disseminated between the mountains and the sea as a heavy atmosphere replete with sickness and death.

Actæon, coming from a distance, was the more sensitive to this stench of the camp, and he thought of the beleaguered people with sadness. Looking toward the city he guessed the horrors hidden behind those reddish walls after a resistance of seven months.

They approached the camp. The Greek saw that this concentration of military forces had assumed the aspect of a permanent city. Few tents of canvas or of skins were left. The winter, which now was drawing to a close, had compelled the besiegers to construct stone huts with thatched roofs, and wooden houses which looked like towers and served as supports to the earthworks thrown up roundabout the camp.

Hannibal, as if reading Actæon's thought, smiled savagely while his eyes swept the work of destruction wrought by his army outside the city.

"You find all this greatly changed, eh, Actæon?"

"I see that your troops have not been idle while you were off punishing the rebels in Celtiberia."

"Maherbal, my chief of cavalry, is an excellent aide. When I returned he showed me two of the walls of Sa-

guntum destroyed, and a part of the city in our power. Do you see that citadel near the Acropolis, inside the walled district? Well, that is ours. The catapults, which you can see from here, shoot into Saguntum, which has become reduced to half its former size—and they still dream of defending themselves! They still hope for auxiliaries from Rome! Stubborn brutes! They have constructed a line of walls for the third time, and thus they have gone on losing ground and persisting in the defense until nothing is left to them but the Forum, where I shall knife every man, woman, and child whom I find alive—O, proud and indomitable city! I will make you my slave!"

The African turned to his old-time companion and changed the conversation.

"Your eyes are opened at last, and you have come to me. Are you going to follow me with enthusiasm? Will you join me in that series of enterprises of which I spoke to you one day at sunrise here on this very road? Perhaps you will become a king because of having followed Hannibal, as did Ptolemy following Alexander. Are you resolved?"

Actæon hesitated a moment before replying, and Hannibal read indecision in his eyes—the desire to deceive.

"Do not lie, Greek; lies are for enemies, or for preserving life. I am your friend, and I have promised to respect your safety. Can it be that you do not mean to follow me?"

"Well, of a truth, I do not," said the Greek with resolution. "I wish to return to the city, and if you truly have affection for the companion of your youth, let me go."

"But you will perish inside that city! Do not expect mercy if we force our entrance through the breach!"

"I shall die," said the Athenian simply, "but there, inside those walls, are men who received me as a compatriot when I was wandering hungry over the world; there is a woman who took me in when I was poor, and gave me love and riches. They sent me to Rome that I might bring them a word of hope, and I must return, even though it be only to give them sorrow and pain. What does it matter if you set me free? To-morrow perhaps you can kill me. I shall be one more mouth to feed, and surely hunger must reign in Saguntum. Perhaps when I tell them the truth, when they see me return without assistance, their courage may weaken and they may give up the town to you. Let me pass through the lines, Hannibal; with this, it may be that without desiring to do so, I shall forward your plans."

Hannibal looked at him in surprise.

"Madman! I never believed an Athenian capable of such a sacrifice. You are such a light-hearted people, so given to perfidy, so false when you wish to satisfy your egoism! You are the first Greek I ever found faithful to the city which adopted him. Carthage had worse luck with the mercenaries from your country! It is impossible to make anything of you; you are only half a man! Love overmasters you; you are not satisfied as I am with the woman who wanders around the camp, or whom one takes when a city is assaulted and afterwards turns over to the soldiers. You bind yourself to a woman, you become her slave, and you seek an inglorious death in a dark corner of the world, like a mercenary in the service of a handful of merchants,

merely for the sake of seeing her again. Go, madman, go! I give you your liberty—I wish to hear no more about you. I was ready to make you a hero and you answer me like a slave. Go in to Saguntum, but know that the protection of Hannibal abandons you from this moment. If you fall into my hands inside the city you will be my prisoner, never my friend!"

Digging his heels into his horse's ribs, Hannibal dashed into his camp, contemptuously turning his back upon the Greek. In a moment a young Carthaginian approached, who, without a word, nor even a glance at him, grasped his bridle-reins and proceeded toward Saguntum.

As they gained the outposts of the besieging army the Carthaginian pronounced a word and Actæon passed on amid the hostile gaze of the soldiers who had heard of the scene at the port, and were clamoring with rage, thinking of the chains which the legates from Rome had the insolence to show to their chief. That Greek who was about to enter the besieged city must have been a companion of the legates, and many placed an arrow in the bow to shoot at him, but were restrained by a cold and haughty glance from the young Carthaginian who spoke in the name of Hannibal.

They arrived at the ruins of the first walled quarter. The van of the besieging army was within the shelter of the walls. The Greek dismounted, and breaking a thorny branch from a bush he walked on, holding it aloft as a signal of peace.

He stood before the wall which had been built under his direction one night to hold back the invader. Upon it he saw the helmets of only a few defenders. The

besieger was directing his attacks against the upper part. That side of the city where the early battles had taken place was almost abandoned. The guardians on the wall greeted Actæon with loud shouts of surprise and joy, and they lowered a rope of esparto to help him climb up by means of the rough places on the wall, until he could enter through a crenel near the top. All surrounded the Greek eagerly. It seemed as if he were in the presence of spectres. Their bodies appeared ready to slip out of their ample armor; their faces, sad, yellow, parchment-like, were hidden beneath the visors of their helmets; their fleshless, wrinkled hands could barely sustain their weapons, and a strange, golden effulgence glowed in their eyes.

Actæon parried their flood of questions with kind words of encouragement. He would speak opportunely; he must first render an account of his mission to the Elders of the Senate. They must be calm; before night they should know all. Filled with commiseration in the presence of these heroes, he lied mercifully, declaring that Rome would not forget Saguntum, and that he had come in advance of the legions sent by the allies.

From the houses nearby, from the streets close to the wall, issued men and women drawn by news of the arrival of the Greek. They surrounded him, they questioned him; all wished to be first to receive the news to scatter it through the city. Defending himself from them, Actæon gazed with horror at their lean, yellow faces, their earthy skin outlining the prominent sutures of their skulls; their sunken eyes in their black orbits shining with an unearthly light, like fading stars reflected in the depths of a well, and their emaciated

arms, which creaked like canes as they moved them with nervous emotion.

He started onward, escorted by the multitude, preceded by boys absolutely nude, horrible to look at, with skins ready to break from the pressure of their ribs outlined one above the other, with enormously large heads above their fleshless necks. They staggered painfully, as if their tottering, thread-like limbs could not bear the weight of their bodies; some, to lessen their suffering, dragged themselves along the ground, lacking the strength to stand.

Actæon beheld a deserted corpse lying in a corner, the face covered with strange flies which glinted in the sunshine with metallic reflections. Farther on at a cross street, some women were trying to raise to his feet a naked youth beside whom lay his abandoned bow. The Greek noted with horror his sunken, inward-curving abdomen, a palpitating whirlpool of skin between the protruding hip bones which threatened to burst from the body. It was a mummy still showing a flickering spark of life in the eyes, opening and shutting its parched and blackened lips as if feeding on the unnourishing air.

He continued on his way down the lengthy streets, but no more people joined the group. The doors of many houses remained closed, despite the clamor of the crowd, and Actæon contrasted this solitude with the great multitude of people during the early days of the siege. Dead dogs lying in the gullies, as emaciated as the people themselves, polluted the atmosphere. At street crossings lay skeletons of horses and mules, clean and white, holding not even a scrap of flesh to satisfy

the repugnant insects buzzing in the atmosphere of the doomed city.

With his gift of keen observation, the Greek's attention was fixed by the warriors' weapons. He saw only cuirasses of metal; those made of leather had disappeared. The shields displayed their texture of osier or bull-tendon, destitute of their coverings of hide. In one corner he saw two old men fighting over a black and stringy morsel; it was a bit of crow boiled in water. Many two-storied houses had been demolished to obtain stones for use in the new wall which barred the advance of the enemy.

Desolating hunger had swept everything with cruel touch. Even the most fetid and repugnant matter had been turned to account. It was as if the besiegers had already broken into the city and had carried off everything of worth, leaving nothing but the buildings behind as silent witnesses to their rapine. Hunger and death stalked hand in hand beside the desperate Saguntines.

On approaching the Forum a woman pushed her way through the people toward the Greek and flung her arms around his neck.

"Actæon, my love!" cried Sónnica.

The privations of the siege had left deep marks upon her. She did not present the appearance of extreme emaciation as did most, but she was thin and pale, her nose sharpened, her cheeks transmitting an interior light, the arms whch clung to him thin and hot with fever. A blue circle surrounded her eyes, and her rich tunic hung loose in empty folds; her body, in growing thinner, seemed to have gained in height.

"Actæon——my love!" she cried again, "I had lost

hope of ever seeing you! Bless you, bless you for coming back!"

She walked beside him, one of her arms around his neck. The multitude looked upon Sónnica with veneration; she had sacrificed herself for the poor, sharing with them each day the shrinking supplies of her storehouses.

Actæon recognized Euphobias the philosopher in the crowd, his garments more ragged than ever, almost naked, but with an appearance of relative vigor which contrasted strangely with the starving appearance of the majority. Lachares and the elegant young friends of Sónnica bowed to him from a distance with a distraught expression. They had the look of starving men, but they concealed their pallor beneath rouge and other cosmetics, and they wore their richest vestments as if to console themselves for their privations with the pomp of useless luxury. The young slave boys who accompanied them moved their emaciated limbs, covered by gold-embroidered garments, and gazing at their pendants of pearls, they yawned painfully. The crowd halted in the Forum. The Elders had gathered in the temple near the quadrangle. Above, on the Acropolis, the Carthaginians who occupied a part of the hill, kept up a continual bombardment, and great stones from the catapults fell constantly. Some of these reached the Forum, and the roofs of many houses and walls were pierced and shattered by the enormous projectiles.

Actæon entered the temple alone. The number of Ancients had diminished. Some had died, victims of hunger and pestilence; others, with juvenile ardor, had rushed forth to defend the walls, and there en-

countered death. The prudent Alcon seemed to enjoy great ascendancy, and he figured at the head of the assembly. Events had justified the prudence which had caused him in other days to declare against the warlike enterprises of the city and their fondness for alliances.

"Speak, Actæon," said Alcon. "Tell us the truth, the whole truth! After the misfortunes the gods have already sent us, we can bear even greater."

The Greek looked at the men, wrapped in their flowing mantles, holding their tall staves of authority, awaiting his words with an anxiety which they made an effort to conceal behind majestic calmness.

He related his audience by the Roman Senate; he told of the caution which had impelled it to favor conciliatory measures; of the arrival of the legates off Saguntum; of their extraordinary reception by Hannibal, and of the departure of the ambassadors for Carthage to demand the punishment of the chieftain and desistance from the siege of Saguntum.

As the sad tale proceeded the calmness of the Elders gradually dissipated. Some, more violent, arose to their feet and rent their garments, crying aloud with grief; others, in their excitement, beat their foreheads with clenched fists, raging with fury on hearing that Rome had not sent her legions; and the eldest among them, without sacrificing their dignity, wept unashamed, allowing their tears to stream down their fleshless cheeks into their snowy beards.

"They have forsaken us!"

"It will be too late when help arrives!"

"Saguntum will perish before the Romans can reach Carthage!"

The assemblage remained long in a state of desperation. Some, motionless in their seats from weakness, implored the gods to let them die ere they should behold the downfall of their people.

It seemed as if the hordes of Hannibal were already clamoring at the temple doors.

"Restrain yourselves, Elders!" admonished Alcon. "Remember that the citizens of Saguntum stand waiting outside these walls. If they suspect your despair, discouragement will spread abroad, and this very night we will become the slaves of Hannibal!"

Slowly the Elders recovered their composure, and silence reigned. All awaited the counsel of Alcon the Prudent. He spoke.

"You do not entertain the thought of immediate surrender of the city, do you?"

A roar of indignation from the Senate answered him.

"Never, never!"

"Then, in order to keep hearts beating with hope, to prolong the defense a few more days, you must lie; you must inspire in the Saguntines a deceptive confidence. Provisions are exhausted; those who man the walls, weapons in hand, have eaten the flesh of the last horses that remained in the city. The plebs are perishing of hunger. Every night hundreds of corpses are gathered and burned on the Acropolis for fear of their being devoured by wandering dogs pressed by hunger, which have turned into veritable wild beasts that attack even the living. There is a complaint that some of the foreigners sheltered in the city, in company with slaves

and mercenaries, lie in wait by night near the walls to eat whatever bodies they find. The cisterns of the city are almost dry; there is but little water left, and that is thick with mud; and yet no one in Saguntum talks of surrender, and the defense must be continued. We all know what awaits us if we fall into the hands of Hannibal."

"I have talked with him," said Actæon, "and he is inexorable. If he enters Saguntum every man of us will become his slave!"

The assembly stirred again with indignation.

"We will die first!" shouted the Elders.

Hastily they agreed upon what must be said to the people. They swore by the gods to conceal the truth. They would prolong the sacrifice in the hope that aid from Rome might come in time. Composing their countenances so that none should divine their despair, the Elders walked out of the temple. Swiftly the news flashed through the city. The legates had proceeded to Carthage to waste no time in the camp; there they would demand the punishment of Hannibal. The legions which Rome was sending to the support of the Saguntines would arrive at any moment.

The crowd received this specious fabrication with cold insensibility. The sufferings of the siege had deadened their feelings. Besides, they had been fired so many times with hope of the coming of the Romans that they doubted and would not believe until they saw the fleet itself.

Actæon mingled with the starving crowd searching for Sónnica. He found her surrounded by Lachares

and the young gallants. Near them stood Euphobias, smiling at Sónnica, but not venturing to approach.

"The gods have protected you on your journey, Actæon," said the parasite. "You look better than we who have remained in the city. One can plainly see that you have fed."

"But you, philosopher," said the Greek, "are not so lean and emaciated as the others. Who maintains you?"

"My poverty. I was so accustomed to hunger in times of plenty that now I scarcely notice the famine. Observe the advantages of being a philosopher and a beggar!"

"Trust not the words of that monster," said Lachares with repugnance. "He is as beastly as a Celtiberian. He eats daily; but he should be crucified in the middle of the Forum as a warning. He has been seen at night wandering near the walls with a band of slaves in search of dying men."

The Greek turned from the parasite with disgust.

"Do not believe it, Actæon," said Euphobias. "Now they envy me my beggar's parsimony, as in other times they jeered at it. Hunger is my ancient companion, and she respects me."

All drew away from the parasite, and Actæon followed Sónnica to her house. The beautiful Greek woman was living almost alone. Many of her servants had been killed on the walls; others had perished in the streets, victims of pestilence. Some slaves, unable to resist the torments of hunger, had run away to the besieging camp. Two aged slave-women lay groaning in a corner, amidst stacks of luxurious furniture and chests filled with riches. The great warehouses in the

lower story were empty. A gang of boys had taken possession, and passed the time watching cat-like in hopes of some stray rat issuing from a corner, that they might fall upon it as an animal of inestimable value.

"Tell me of Rhanto!" the Greek said to his beloved.

"Poor child! I see her only occasionally. She will not stay here; I have her brought to me so that I can watch over her, but at the first opportunity she slips away. Grief over Erotion's death has caused her to lose her reason. Day and night she wanders along the walls. She goes where the battle rages fiercest, and she passes among flying missiles as if she does not see them. By night I hear from afar the strange dirges which she chants to her Erotion; sometimes she appears crowned with a wreath of those flowers which grow on the walls, and she asks for the son of Mopsus, as if he were hidden among the defenders. The people believe that she is in communication with the gods, and they look upon her with awe and ask her what will be the fate of Saguntum."

The two spent the night amidst the piled up riches in the warehouse wrapped in costly tapestries, insensible to their surroundings, as if they were still in the rich villa on the domain, at the end of one of those banquets which had so scandalized many of the Saguntines.

Days passed. The city was growing weaker, but the people still firm in their resolution, continued the defense, with stomachs faint from starvation. The besiegers made no violent assaults. Hannibal guessed the condition of the city, and, desirous of avoiding further

shedding of the blood of his troops, he allowed time to pass, maintaining only a rigid blockade, waiting for hunger and pestilence to complete his triumph.

The mortality in the streets increased. There was no longer any one left to gather up the dead; the crematory fire on the Acropolis had gone out. Corpses, abandoned in the doorways of their homes, were covered with loathsome insects, and birds of rapine audaciously came down by night into the heart of the city disputing the prey of vagabond dogs which prowled the streets with lolling tongues and flaming eyes.

Vile smelling people of savage aspect, possessed by the delirium of starvation, dragged themselves cautiously through the streets armed with clubs, stones, and missiles. They went foraging as soon as night fell. Euphobias guided them, giving counsel with majestic emphasis, as if he were a great captain commanding his army. When they managed to kill a crow or a savage dog they carried it to the Forum and roasted it over a bonfire, quarreling violently over the noisome morsels, while the rich citizens stood aloof, faint with hunger but nauseated by such horrors.

Spring had set in. It was a gloomy springtime, revealed to the besiegers by little flowers growing up among the weeds in the crevices of the towers and on the roofs of the houses. Winter was over, and yet it was cold in Saguntum, with a tomb-like chill which the besieged felt in the very marrow of their bones. The sun shone, but the city seemed obscured by a fetid mist which imparted to people and to houses a leaden color.

One morning, on his way to the upper part of the mount where the defense continued, Actæon met the pru-

dent Alcon in the Forum. This loyal citizen revealed discouragement in his dejected appearance.

"Athenian," he said, with a mysterious expression, "I am resolved that this must end. The city can resist no further. She has waited long enough for aid from Rome. Let Saguntum fall, and let Rome be filled with shame because of her infidelity to her allies. This day I shall go to Hannibal's camp and sue for peace."

"Have you considered it carefully?" exclaimed the Greek. "Do you not fear the indignation of your people when they see you treating with the enemy?"

"I love my city well, and I cannot remain impassive and witness its sacrifice, its interminable agony. Few are aware of the actual conditions, but I can tell you, Actæon, because you are discreet. We are much worse off than the people realize. There is not a scrap of meat left for those who are defending our walls. This morning there was nothing but mud in the bottom of the cisterns. We have no water. A few days more of resistance and we shall be forced to eat dead bodies like those soulless creatures who feed by night. We shall have to kill the children to placate our thirst with their blood."

Alcon was silent for a moment; he passed his hand over his forehead with a gesture of pain as if to obliterate terrible recollections.

"No one knows better than we Elders what occurs in the city," he continued. "The gods must shudder with horror when they see the deeds done in Saguntum since they abandoned her. Listen and forget, Actæon," he said in a low voice and with an accent of fear. "Yesterday two women, maddened by hunger, drew lots to

choose which one of their children they should devour. We Elders have closed our eyes and our ears; we have not desired to see nor to hear, understanding that punishment would only serve to increase the horrors. The men who are fighting on the walls are chewing the leather from their weapons to deceive hunger. Their flesh is loosened from their bones, they weaken and fall as if wounded by an invisible stroke from the gods. We have resisted for nearly eight months; two-thirds of the city no longer exists. We have done enough to demonstrate before heaven and before man how Saguntum fulfills her oaths."

The Greek bowed his head, convinced by Alcon's arguments.

"Moreover the valor of the city is breaking down," continued the Elder. "Faith is dying. The omens are all against us. There are people who, during the night, have seen globes of fire rise from the Acropolis and fly toward the sea, plunging into the waters like shooting stars which cut through the blue of heaven with a stream of light. The people believe that they are the penates of the city, who, divining the coming destruction of Saguntum, are abandoning it to go and establish themselves on the other side of the sea whence they came. Last night, those who were watching up there in the temple of Hercules saw a serpent glide from beneath the tomb of Zacynthus, hissing as if it were wounded. It was blue, with golden stars—the serpent which bit Zacynthus and was the cause of the foundation of the city around the tomb of the hero. He crawled between the feet of the astonished watchers; he fled down the mount, and crept off across the plain in the direction of

the sea. He also has abandoned us; the sacred reptile which was like the tutelary god of Saguntum."

"It may not be true," said the Greek. "It may be the hallucinations of a people tormented by hunger."

"That may be; but observe the women and you will find them weeping; in addition to their misery they are lamenting the flight of the serpent of Zacynthus. They believe the city defenseless, and many men on the walls will feel weaker to-day when they hear of the strange disappearance. Faith is the staff on which the people lean."

The two men remained silent for a while.

"Go," said the Greek, at last: "Speak to Hannibal, and may the gods incline his heart toward clemency!"

"Why do you not come with me—you who have traveled so much, and who possess the eloquence of conviction? You can help me."

"Hannibal knows me. I have refused his friendship, and he hates me. Go and save the city. My fate is sealed. The African will never abate his anger. He will pardon anyone but me. I will die rather than become his slave, or suffer myself to be put to death on a cross."

CHAPTER X

THE LAST NIGHT

FIGHTING on the walls with the defenders of the upper part of the city late in the afternoon Actæon saw Rhanto coming down a street near the ramparts.

He had not seen the shepherdess since his return to Sagùntum, and now he noticed the changes wrought by the sufferings of the siege, and by the grief which was breaking her reason.

She walked absorbed, with bowed head, unconscious of her surroundings, and in her tangled hair were little faded flowers which at every step dropped their withered petals. Her torn and dirty tunic gave glimpses of her emaciated body, which still preserved the grace and freshness admired by the Greek. Her breasts had developed somewhat, as if pain had matured her figure; her eyes dilated by dementia, seemed to fill her whole face, shedding a mysterious light about her, an aureole of fever.

She advanced slowly, raising her head at times, looking up at the men on the wall, and finally stopping at the foot of the stone steps she murmured in a supplicating voice, like the convulsive sobbing of a child:

"Erotion! Erotion!"

Behind the mantelets of the besiegers the defenders noticed fresh activity, as if a new attack against the

city were being attempted, but in spite of it the Greek came down from the wall in his eagerness to see the girl.

"Rhanto, shepherdess, do you know me?"

He addressed her tenderly, taking one of her hands, but she tried to spring away from him, as if she had been startled from a sleep. Then she grew faint, and fixing her enormous, frightened eyes on the Greek, she exclaimed:

"You! Is it you?"

"Do you recognize me?""

"Yes, you are the Athenian; you are my master; the lover of Sónnica the rich. Tell me, where is Erotion?"

The Greek did not know how to answer, but Rhanto continued speaking without awaiting his reply.

"They tell me he is dead; even I saw him lying at the foot of the walls; but it is not true; it was a bad dream. It was his father, Mopsus the archer, who died. Since then he runs away from me as if he wishes to weep alone for his father's death. He hides from me by day. I see him from afar, upon the walls, among the defenders, but when I climb up to search for him I find none but armed men, and Erotion disappears. He is only faithful to me at night. Then he seeks me, he comes to me. Scarcely do I conceal myself at the foot of the stairway and rest my head upon my knees than I see him coming, looking for me in the darkness, strong and loving, with his quiver at his side and his bow slung across his shoulders. When he comes the ferocious dogs which slink through the shadows, sniffing in my face and staring at me with their gloomy eyes, are

frightened away. He comes to me, he sits beside me; he smiles, but he is ever silent. I speak to him and he answers me with a tender glance, but never with a word. I seek his shoulder, to lean my head upon it as in other days, and he flees, he disappears as if dissolved in shadow. What does it mean, good Greek? If you see him, ask him why he hides from me. Tell him not to run away!——He loves you so much, so much! How often has he talked to me of you and of your country!"

She was silent a moment, as if these words had aroused within her a whole past of recollections. With a painful effort, which was reflected in her face, she caught at them and arranged them in her mind. Slowly surged through her memory again the image of those happy days before the siege when she and Erotion ran hand in hand through the valley and had for their house all the groves of the Saguntine domain.

She smiled at Actæon, looking at him affectionately, and she recalled their several meetings; their first interview on the Road of the Serpent when he had just disembarked, poor and unknown. Then, the touch of paternal protection with which he greeted them when he found them in the fields climbing the cherry trees and quarreling playfully over the red fruit, and that surprise beneath the leafy fig trees, when she, in her virginal beauty was acting as a model for the young sculptor. Did he remember? Had the Greek forgotten those days of peace and joy?

Actæon did indeed cherish them in his memory. He still retained the impression caused by the vision of the lovely shepherdess, and at the same moment his eyes

searched the tattered tunic, seeking with an artist's delight the warm tones of her amber skin.

But Rhanto's mind, after evoking these recollections, began again to wander. Where was Erotion? Had Actæon seen him? Was he up there with the defenders? The Greek held her back catching her by the hand to prevent her climbing to the top of the wall.

The defenders were shouting wildly, shooting their arrows and throwing darts and stones. The besiegers had begun the attack. Projectiles came hurtling from outside the walls, passing over the merlons like dark-colored birds, as if the Africans were covering an assault with battering-rams and pickaxes to open a breach.

Actæon, who since his return to Saguntum had again assumed control of the work of defense, must go up on the wall.

"Run away, Rhanto," he said hastily. "You will be killed here. Go to Sónnica's house——I will take you to Erotion. But fly! Hide yourself! See how the missiles are falling around us!"

He shoved her from the stairway with an energetic push which nearly drove her to her knees.

The Greek ran up hastily, hearing the ceaseless and deadly hisses rending the air about his head. Before he reached the merlons he heard a faint groan at his back, a gentle cry which recalled to Actæon's mind the bleating of a fawn when pierced by the huntsman's arrow. Turning he saw Rhanto half way up the steps, wavering, ready to fall backward, her breast covered with blood and pierced by a long feather-tipped shaft, still quivering from the swiftness of its flight.

She had started to follow him up the wall, but an arrow had caught her.

"Rhanto! Poor Rhanto!"

Obeying an impulse of grief which he could not explain to himself, but which was stronger than his will, he forgot the defense of the wall, the attack of the enemy, everything, to run toward the girl, who sank down with the gentle flutter of a wounded bird.

He took her in his strong arms and laid her at the foot of the steps. Rhanto sighed, moving her head as if trying to rid herself of the pain which had taken possession of her.

The Greek supported her by the shoulders, calling tenderly:

"Rhanto! Rhanto!"

In her eyes, enlarged by pain, the light seemed to condense. The expression of her face had now become sane; it lost, at moments, the vagueness of dementia. Pain seemed to have restored her reason, and in this supreme moment of lucidity the whole past arose clear in her mind.

"Do not die, Rhanto," murmured the Greek, impulsively, "wait; I will draw out that iron; I will carry you on my back to the Forum so that they shall cure you."

But the girl shook her head sadly. No, she wished to die. She wished to join Erotion, near the gods, among the clouds of rose and gold where wandered the Mother of Love, followed by those who had loved each other devotedly on earth. She had roamed for weeks like a shadow among the horrors of the besieged city, be-

lieving that Erotion still lived, searching for him everywhere; but Erotion was dead; she remembered it well now; she herself had seen his corpse.

"Since he is dead why should I live?"

"Live for me!" cried Actæon, stung with grief, unconscious of his surroundings, deaf to the cries of the defenders on the wall and to the footsteps of someone approaching on the street.

"Rhanto, shepherdess, listen to me! Now I understand why I longed to see you; why your memory came to me so often in Rome whenever I thought of Saguntum. Live and be to Actæon the last spring of his existence! I love you, Rhanto! You are my last love; the flower which blooms in the winter of my life! I love you, Rhanto! I have loved you since that day when I saw you revealed like a goddess. Live and let me be your Erotion!"

The girl, her face clouded by the shadow of death, smiled, murmuring:

"Actæon, good Greek, thank you, thank you!"

Her head slipped from between Actæon's hands and fell heavily on the ground. The Athenian remained motionless, mutely gazing at the body of the girl. The silence which suddenly fell on the wall seemed to arouse him from his painful stupor. The besiegers had suspended the attack. The Greek stood up, but he knelt again to press kisses on the still warm mouth of the shepherdess and upon her unquivering wide-open eyes, in which the red splendor of the setting sun was reflected as in quiet waters.

As he arose he was startled by Sónnica standing quietly before him, with cold, ironic stare.

"Sónnica! You!"

"I came to tell you to hasten to the Forum. A messenger from the hostile camp has presented himself at the gates of the city asking to speak to the Elders. The people are gathered in the Forum."

Despite the importance of the news Actæon did not stir. He was transfixed by Sónnica's cold rigidity.

"How long have you been here?"

"Long enough to see how you bade my slave farewell forever!"

She was silent for a moment, then as if impelled by a sentiment stronger than her will, she approached him with flashing eyes and with outstretched hands.

"Did you really love her?" she asked bitterly.

"Yes," he replied, faintly, as if ashamed of the confession. "I know now that I loved her——but I love you also."

They stood motionless, their eyes fixed upon the body which lay between them. It was like a cold intervening wall, suddenly risen and separating them forever.

Actæon was shamed by the grief which his words caused her who had so loved him. Sónnica seemed stunned by his immense deception, and she gazed frigidly at the body of the slave with the eyes of an implacable Nemesis.

"Go, Actæon!" she said. "They are waiting for you in the Forum. The Elders are calling for you to serve as interpreter for the messenger from Hannibal."

The Athenian advanced a few steps, and then stopped, gently imploring mercy for the body.

"It will be deserted. Night is coming on, and—— the hungry dogs——the soulless men who look for corpses——"

He chilled with horror to think that the beautiful body which had thrilled him with admiration might be devoured by the beasts.

Sónnica replied with a gesture. He might go. She would stay on guard, and, mastered by her chill hauteur, he turned and hastened toward the Forum.

As he reached the quadrangle it was growing dark. In the centre burned the great fire which was lighted every night to combat the mortal springtime chill.

The Elders brought their ivory chairs to the foot of the temple steps to receive Hannibal's messenger in the presence of the populace. The news had circulated throughout the city, and the people flocked to the Forum, eager to hear the propositions of the besieger. New groups poured in each moment along the streets leading to the great square where the waning life of the city was concentrated.

Actæon placed himself near the Elders. He glanced around for Alcon, but failed to see him. The aged senator was still in the hostile camp, and the coming of this emissary must be in consequence of his interview with Hannibal.

A senator explained the circumstances. An unarmed enemy had presented himself before the walls, waving an olive branch. He asked to speak to the Senate in the name of the besiegers, and the assembly of Elders thought it wise to summon the whole city to participate in this supreme deliberation.

Orders to admit the messenger had been given, and

soon an armed group was seen approaching, making its way through the crowd, conducting a man with uncovered head, unarmed, and carrying a branch in his right hand as a symbol of peace.

As he passed before the fire the ruddy glow of the flames fell full upon his face and the Forum reverberated with a clamor of indignation. They had recognized him:

"Alorcus! It is Alorcus!'

"Traitor!"

"Ingrate!"

Many hands reached for their swords to fall upon him; above the heads of the multitude menacing arms brandished spears; but the presence of the Elders, and the sad smile of the Celtiberian restrained them. Moreover, the people felt the weakness of hunger; they had little strength left for indignation, and they were eager to hear the messenger, to learn the fate reserved for them by the enemy.

Alorcus advanced until he stood before the Elders, and the great concourse subsided into profound silence, interrupted only by the crackling of the wood in the fire. All eyes were fixed on the Celtiberian. "Alcon the prudent is not with you?" he began.

They glanced around in surprise. It was true; until then the absence of the man who was first in all public acts, had not been noticed.

"You look for him in vain," continued the Celtiberian. "Alcon is in the camp of Hannibal. Heart-broken over the condition of the city, realizing that it is impossible to persist longer in the defense, he has sacrificed himself for you, and at the risk of his life he

came to Hannibal's tent a few hours ago to beg him, with tears, to have compassion upon you."

"And why has he not returned with you?" asked one of the Elders.

"He was afraid and ashamed to repeat Hannibal's words to you——the conditions which he imposed for the surrender of the city."

The silence grew more oppressive. The multitude divined in the terror of the absent Alcon the frightful demands of the conqueror which made all hearts beat fast with dread even before hearing them.

Fresh groups of people kept straggling in to the Forum. Even the defenders of the city abandoned the walls, attracted by the event, and stood at the entrances of the streets around the quadrangle, the flames from the bonfire glinting on their bronze helmets and on their shields of varied shapes, round, rectangular, and oval. Actæon also saw Sónnica make her way through the crowd and seat herself near the group formed by the elegant young gallants who admired her.

Alorcus continued speaking:

"You know me well. A moment ago I heard threats, I saw menacing gestures when you recognized me. I understand your indignation at seeing me before you. Perhaps I am an ingrate; but remember that I was born in other lands, and that my father's death placed me at the head of a people whom I have to obey and to lead in their alliances. Never have I forgotten that I was the guest of Saguntum; I cherish the memory of your hospitality, and I am as interested in the fate of this city as if it were my native land. Ponder well your situation, Saguntines! Valor has its limits, and no

matter how much you exert yourselves the gods have decreed the ruin of heroic Saguntum. They show it by having forsaken you, and your courage is all in vain before their immutable will."

The vague words of Alorcus augmented the dread of the people. They feared the conditions set by Hannibal, and they read their harshness in the Celtiberian's hesitation in pronouncing them.

"The conditions! Tell us the conditions!" they shouted from all sides of the Forum.

"The proof that I have come in your sole interests," continued Alorcus, as if he did not hear their cries, "lies in the fact that as long as you were able to resist with your own strength, and while you expected assistance from the Romans, never did I come to counsel your submission. But your walls can no longer defend you; every day hundreds of Saguntines perish from hunger; the Romans will not come; they are far away, and occupied with other wars; in place of sending you legions they send you legates, and thus I, seeing that Alcon hesitated to return, face your indignation to bring you a peace rather necessary than advantageous."

"The conditions! The conditions!" demanded the multitude, with a formidable howl which shook the Forum.

"Remember," said Alorcus, "that what the conqueror offers you is a gift, for to-day he is master of everything you possess—your lives and your estates."

This terrible truth, falling upon the multitude, produced silence. "Saguntum, which, for the greater part is already in ruins, and whose extremes his troops already occupy, he takes from you as a punishment; but

Hannibal will permit you to build a new city in the place which he will designate. All your riches, those in the public treasury as well as those in your houses, shall be turned over to the conqueror. Hannibal will respect your lives and those of your wives and children, but you must depart from Saguntum to a place which he will indicate, unarmed, and with but two garments each. I understand that these terms are stern, but your misfortune commends them to you, for it is worse to die, and to have your families fall as booty of war into the hands of a triumphant army."

Alorcus ceased speaking, but still the Forum remained in silence, a silence profound, threatening, like the leaden calm which precedes the tempest.

"No, Saguntines! No!" shouted a woman.

Actæon recognized the voice of Sónnica.

"No, no!" answered the multitude, with a thundering echo.

They swayed and surged from place to place; compact masses crowded against each other, possessed with fury, as if they would rend themselves in pieces to give vent to the wrath produced by the conditions of the conqueror.

Sónnica had disappeared; but Actæon saw her return to the Forum followed by a cordon of people, slaves, women, soldiers, bearing upon their backs the rich furniture from the villa which had been stored in the warehouse; the chests of jewels, the sumptuous tapestries, ingots of silver, and boxes of gold dust. The multitude observed this procession of riches without guessing Sónnica's purpose.

"No! No!" repeated the Greek woman, as if talking to herself.

She was infuriated at the conqueror's proposals. She imagined herself departing from the city with no other fortune than the tunic she wore and another over her arm, compelled to beg along the highway, or to labor in the fields as a slave, persecuted by the fierce soldiers of many nations!

"No! No!" she repeated energetically, making her way through the crowd to the fire in the centre of the Forum.

She was magnificent with her auburn hair loosened in her excitement, her tunic rent by struggling through the multitude, her eyes flashing with the expression of a Fury who found an acrid satisfaction in destruction. Of what use were riches? Of what use was life? Her desperate energy was spurred by the bitterness which she had tasted an hour ago before the body of her slave.

She gave the signal by hurling into the bonfire an image of Venus in jasper and silver which she carried in her arms, and which disappeared in the flames as if it were a clod. The wretched and starving crowd which followed imitated her with intense relish. The destruction of so many riches made them howl with joy, and they danced in their gladness—they, so poor, who had passed their lives in the deprivation of slavery! Into the flames fell dainty caskets of ivory, cedar, and ebony, and as they clashed against the firewood they burst open, spilling treasures within—collars of pearls, clusters of topazes and emeralds, diamond earrings, the whole scale of precious stones, which sparkled for an instant against the half-burnt wood like gleaming salamanders. Then

came the tapestries, the silver-embroidered veils, the tunics of spun-gold flowers, the golden sandals, the chairs with lion claws, the couches with metal clamps, mirrors, lamps, bottles of perfume, rich inlaid marble tables, all the splendors of Sónnica the rich. The poverty-stricken multitude, transported by this sacrifice, applauded with bellowing enthusiasm as it saw the fire grow and grow with so much fuel, until the flames mounted to a great height and scattered ashes and sparks over the roofs of the houses.

"Hannibal wants riches!" shouted Sónnica in a hoarse voice which resembled a howl. "Come, pile here your treasures, and let the African lay siege to the fire for them!"

No need of urging them to imitate her! Many of the Elders who had withdrawn at the first moment of confusion now returned to the Forum carrying chests beneath their white mantles, and flung them into the fire. They were the hoarded treasures from their houses.

Above the heads of the multitude furniture and rich fabrics passed from hand to hand until they tumbled into the immense furnace, which whirled its flames higher and higher, crowned by a white and luminous smoke.

It was a holocaust in honor of the dead and silent gods on the Acropolis. Houses seemed to turn themselves inside out to fling their adornments and riches upon the fire. The men pursued their work of destruction silently and gloomily; but the women seemed mad, and they danced around the huge bonfire, disheveled, screaming, their eyes bulging from their sockets, hypnotized, caressing the flames with their garments, intoxicated by the

glare, scratching their faces unconscious of their acts, and bellowing curses with mouths foaming with rage. Crazed by the infernal round, unable to resist the fascination of the lambent flames, one of them sprang and fell into the fire. Her hair and clothing blazed for an instant like a torch, and she sank among the white-hot coals. Another hurled into the roaring crematory, as if it were a ball, the babe she had borne in her arms clinging to her empty breast, and then, as if repentant for her crime, she followed the child into the burning pile.

The conflagration had extended to the wooden roofs of the houses around the Forum. A chaplet of flame began to inwreathe the square. The heat and smoke were stifling, and the furniture seemed to travel automatically above the heads of the crowd toward the incandescent kiln through the dense sooty atmosphere. Lachares and his elegant friends began to talk of death. Those effeminate beings discussed with sublime tranquility the manner of their end. They did not wish to follow Sónnica, who had just armed herself with sword and shield to sally forth against the besieging camp and die fighting. It was repugnant to them to think of struggling with rude, half-savage soldiers, to inhale their wild-beast odors, and to fall with their painted faces cleft by a blow, covered with blood, and wallowing in gore like a beheaded ox; neither did it please them to stab themselves—that was a means reserved for heroes. They preferred to die in the flames; they recollected the sacrifice of the Asiatic queens who perished in a fire of perfumed woods. What a pity that this fire smelled so ill! But it was not a moment for refinements; drawing

their mantles over their eyes, shoving their little slave-boys before them with their depilated and perfumed arms, one after the other the elegant young gallants walked into the fire with tranquil step, as if still dwelling in those days of peace when they strolled through the Forum, gratified by the scandal caused by their feminine adornments.

Sónnica gathered her tunic around her waist in order to run with greater freedom, leaving disclosed the resplendent whiteness of her limbs.

"We are going to die, Euphobias," she said to the philosopher, who stood absorbed in contemplation before this spectacle of destruction.

For the first time the philosopher failed to display his insolent and ironic manner. He was grave and frowning; gazing at the people whom he had so often ridiculed, beholding the heroism of their death.

"Die?" he exclaimed. "Must we die? Do you think so, Sónnica?"

"Yes; he who is not willing to be a slave must die. Get a sword and follow me!"

"No, if I must die I will avoid the fatigue of running and the exertion of striking blows. I will die placidly in the sweet indolence which ever embellished my life."

Slowly, deliberately, he walked over to the fire, covered his face with his patched and mended mantle, and laid himself in the flames as calmly as he used to drop down on the porticos of the Forum in the old days of peace.

On the steps of the temple the Elders were stabbing themselves in their breasts with a dagger. Before breathing his last, each passed the weapon on to his

nearest companion, and they died trying to maintain themselves erect in their chairs of state. Groups of women caught up torches lighted at the great fire, and scattered like furious bacchantes throughout Saguntum, setting fire to doors, and flinging burning brands upon the wooden roofs.

Suddenly from the direction of the citadel where the attacks of the besiegers had been concentrated, arose an appalling commotion, as if half a mountain had toppled over. The walls had been abandoned by the defenders who had gathered in the Forum, and a tower which the Carthaginians had undermined some days before had fallen. A cohort of Hannibal's army, seeing the city destitute of the usual outposts and guards, rushed through the breach, and made a signal for Hannibal to enter with his hosts.

"Come on! come on!" shouted Sónnica with a hoarse voice. "This is our last night! I will not die in the fire! I choose to die fighting! I want blood!"

She flew from the Forum like a Fury, followed by Actæon who ran beside her calling her name, trying to gain a look from her. But the beautiful Greek woman was insensible in her rage, as if she had at her side someone she had never seen before. They were followed by a discordant crowd, armed citizens, women brandishing knives and darts, naked youths with no other defense than a spear. They poured out like a stampeded herd, their bronze corselets and their helmets with broken crests shimmering in the firelight, their weapons dyed in blood, and displaying through the tatters of their clothing emaciated limbs which seemed to dance in their loose skin, dried and wrinkled by hunger.

They passed out of Saguntum on the lower side, marching in the glare of the burning city straight upon the camp of the besieger.

A cohort of Celtiberians hurrying toward Saguntum was routed, put in disorder, harried by this troop of desperate beings who ran with lowered head, striking blindly at everything before them. Farther on they encountered other troops who advanced in battle form to meet the sally, and they collided with the line of shields, unable to stand in a struggle hand to hand.

The Saguntines, debilitated by the long siege, their strength exhausted by hunger and sickness, could not withstand the clash. The Celtiberians wounded mercilessly with their two edged swords, and the company of sick men, women, and children, fell rapidly beneath their blows.

Actæon, fighting with his shield before his face and his sword raised against two vigorous soldiers, saw Sónnica receive a stab in the head and drop her weapons, doubling up in agony.

"Actæon! Actæon!" she cried, forgetting her bitterness, the fire of her old love returning to her with death.

She fell face downward on the ground. The Greek started toward her, but at the same instant his ears buzzed as if an immense mass had crashed upon his head; in his side he felt the chill of the steel perforating his flesh; everything turned black, and he sank to the ground, as if falling into a dark and gloomy pit the bottom of which he would never reach.

* * * * * *

The Greek awoke. His chest was weighted down by a form as heavy as a mountain. He was not sure whether he really existed. His members refused to obey him. Only with a painful effort could he open his eyes and understand confusedly why he was there.

Gradually he realized that the something which oppressed his breast was the corpse of a gigantic soldier. Actæon thought he remembered having plunged his sword into the body of the warrior the instant that he fell into the dense and mysterious night.

He looked around. A ruddy glow, as of an endless aurora, scintillated on the abandoned weapons and outlined silhouettes of the bodies lying in heaps or scattered over the field contracted in weird postures by their final convulsions.

In the background a city was burning. The blackened and shapeless structures stood out against the curtain of flames, and through their restless splendor the walls of the Acropolis trembled.

Actæon remembered all that had happened. That city was Saguntum; the conquerors could be heard howling through the streets; they were covered with blood; setting fire to the houses still untouched; cursing a people which only gave itself up after consuming its riches; killing in their fury whatever living thing they encountered in their way, and stabbing the wounded.

As he realized this he knew that he was not dead, but that he was going to die. He knew it by the terrible weakness which overpowered him, by the mortal cold creeping up to his heart; by his mind which was growing dull, and was now but a flickering light.

What of Sónnica? Where could he find Sónnica?

His last thought was to reach her body, which must be near. He wished to kiss her as her slave; to render her that tribute before he died. But as he made a supreme exertion, raising his head from the ground, a wave of warm and sticky liquid covered his face. It was his last blood.

Then he seemed to see, with the vagueness of a vanishing dream, a kind of black centaur, galloping over the slain, and looking at the blazing city, laughing with malevolent joy.

He passed near. His horse's hoofs ploughed into the body of the Celtiberian lying on his breast. The dying Greek recognized the horseman by the light of the conflagration.

It was Hannibal, his head uncovered, possessed by the fury of triumph, galloping on his jet-black horse which seemed to have caught the ferocity of the rider, whinnying, treading on the fallen bodies, lashing his tail above the litter of battle. To the Greek he appeared an infernal demon coming for his soul.

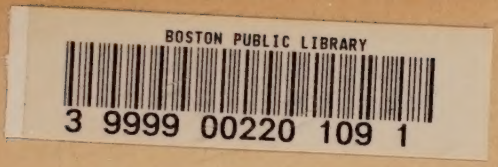
Dimly, like a blurred vision, he saw the face of Hannibal animated by a smile of pride, of cruel satisfaction —the majestic and ferocious visage of one of those gods of Carthage who showed clemency only when human sacrifices were smoking upon their altars.

Hannibal laughed on seeing that at last the city which had detained him eight months before her walls, was his. Now he was free to go on working out his audacious dreams!

The Greek saw no more. He sank finally into eternal night.

Hannibal galloped on around the city, and beholding the purplish glow of the coming day breaking over the sea, he reined in his horse, he looked into the East, and extending his arm, impatient to stretch it across the blue expanse bounded by the horizon, he shouted threateningly, as if challenging an invisible enemy before falling upon it:

"Rome!——Rome!"



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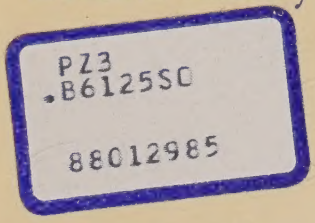

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